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JOHN GERSON

REFORMER AND MYSTIC

BY

JAMES L. CONNOLLY, M. A., S. T. B.
DOCTEUR EN SCIENCES HISTORIQUES (LOVAN.)

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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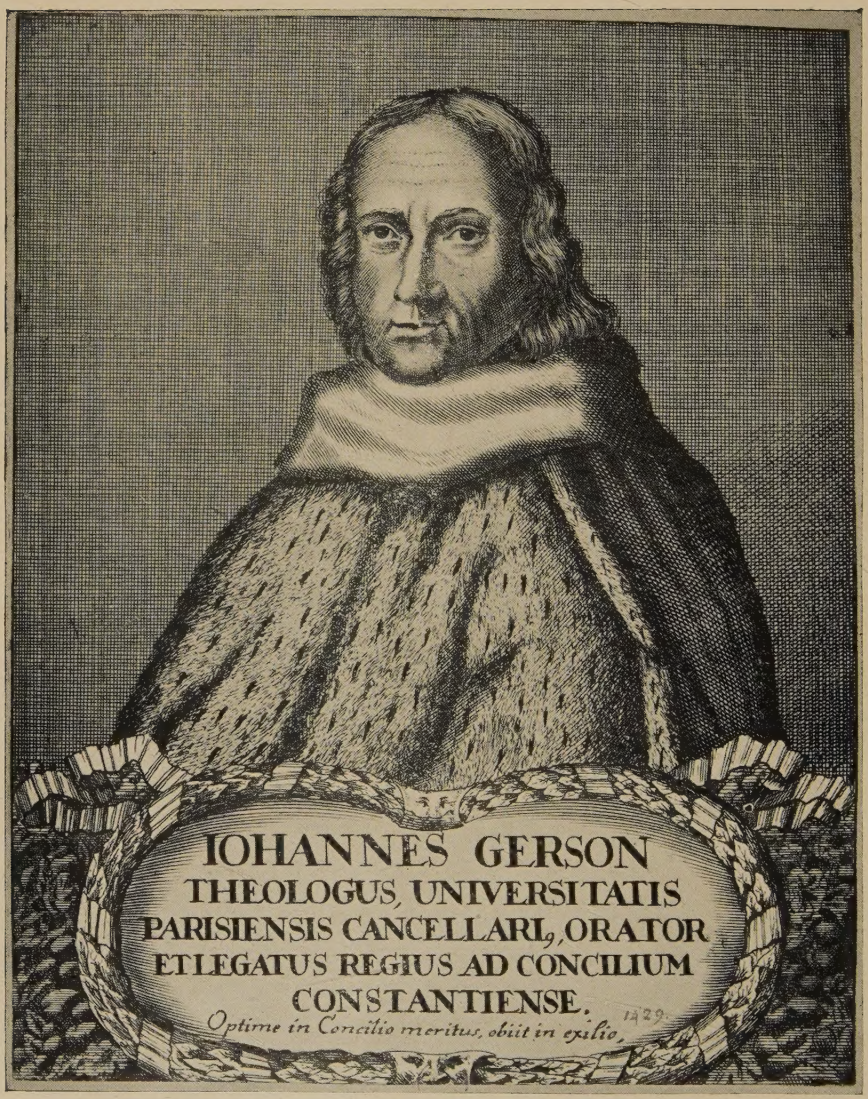

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TO THE

MOST REVEREND

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INTRODUCTION

If there is any sentiment common to Christianity to-day, it is a sentiment in favor of concord and union. If there is any gesture which may be said to express an ideal acceptable to men of all creeds, it is the gesture of the Malines Conferences. The Catholic Church has many times showed her sympathy and has welcomed fullheartedly all sincere projects for reunion, and the Holy Father is ever quick to give proof of his desire to restore all in Christ. In Protestant centers serious effort is being made to overcome differences that have caused divisions in creed and cult, and the Congress of Stockholm and the Conferences at Geneva in recent years are but high points of a movement that is gaining impetus.

But the possibilities for concord do not depend on a spirit of fellowship, nor on a willingness to sacrifice principle. The present sad divisions must be examined in the clear light of history, with an eye to truth and a fear of compromise, — if they are to be mended at all. Present conditions and present needs have their importance, indeed, but expediency has never formed and can never form a just basis for harmony. Suspicion must be killed. Conviction must be won. Justice and not self-interest must prevail. The merits of each case must be examined separately ; the apology for every sect and division must be given fairly and truly ; the situation that gave rise to each of the many Churches that share the name of Christian must be studied anew. Certainly, from a distance of four or five centuries, it must be possible to distinguish fact from fiction and to discern in a true light what too great proximity sometimes distorts. Surely, if we are to hope to establish the unity that once prevailed in all Christianity, we must appreciate and make our own the ideals that prevailed when divisions were almost unheard of.

For this reason the Fifteenth Century affords a meeting place for historians. It is to this period that one must go to

study the Reformation in proper perspective. The growing spirit of nationality with its consequent rivalries and distrusts, the ambitions of Kings and local lords for wealth and power, the unrest of the people, and the irreverence of the scholars, — all these have their place amongst the causes of the Reformation and all take us back to the early years of the Fifteenth Century.

Then was the time when princes learned to bargain with the obedience that they yielded freely to the Church in a former time. In the Schism that divided Christianity into two opposing camps for forty years may be seen the prototype for the rent that occurred a hundred years later, and the blow which Papal prestige suffered when rival Popes belittled themselves in order to gain support, had a repercussion in the days of Luther and Calvin. Christians of the West became used to the idea of challenging the authority and the purposes of the Holy See. A spirit of nationalism that entered even into the Councils was to form a basis for decentralization, and by a strange contradiction, was to develop into the theme and practice of *cujus regio ejus religio.* The system of taxation, the accumulation of benefices, the worldliness of prelates, the misery and ignorance of the lower clergy and of the people, all go back to the time of the Avignon Captivity and the Western Schism, and, because they endured into the Sixteenth Century, furnished the reformers with arguments with which they sought to justify their ruthless censure of Church organization and administration.

It is into this sad period of the Great Western Schism that we are to enter in the study of the life and work of Gerson, and for the attainment of true appreciations of the time, as well as for the acquisition of a criterion by which the reforms of the Sixteenth Century may be fairly judged, we could not be furnished with a better guide. Few men of his time were as well placed to know the wants of the Church and to administer to them. Few tried as he did to carry through measures for reform that would be thoroughgoing and enduring. None were more unselfish and generous than he, and none dedicated themselves to the cause of the reform of the Church *in capite et in membris* as completely as Gerson. It

would be difficult to find any man, in any period, whose life so completely reflects the spirit of his epoch, as the career of the Chancellor of the University of Paris portrays the ideals of the Fifteenth Century.

As an educator, he tried to quell the struggle of the Schools, to make provision for the training of the clergy and the instruction of the people. So complete was his devotion to these tasks that he wrote what may be styled the first catechism of Christian doctrine in the *Opusculum tripartitum*, — a tract destined to inform priests and people of dogma and duties, — and spent no little time in the training of the young. As a preacher, he achieved such renown that he became the spokesman of the University of Paris before the King, and the official representative of France before the Council and before the Pope. As reformer, he built his theories to respond to needs that he knew by experience to exist. He touched all levels of society, appealed to individual characters and strove for personal reform. Fully aware of the cause of all the disorder and evil that existed, he was tireless in his efforts to bring peace to the Church, and union amongst the nations. He strove to restore the Papacy to its rightful place. He tried to bring back reverence for authority, obedience to superiors and a spirit of sacrifice that would work for the reform. But the chief lesson that he taught was the lesson of his Mystical Theology, which was the means whereby he trusted to secure the complete reform of the Church. As a mystic, he led by example. He appealed to the men of his day, — men of all classes and kinds, — to lift up their heads and their hearts and to aspire after better things than the material possessions that they coveted. As a mystic, he aspired, with a resolution kindred to that of the Brethren of the Common Life, to preach to men of every condition and walk of life a Gospel of hope and confidence.

When we consider the whole career of Gerson, it is remarkable how every action takes on its true significance in the light of his projects for reform and of his mystical teaching. Even his journeying into Belgium, Italy, Germany and Austria, — even his role as adviser to Kings, — even his political theories must be judged from that viewpoint. It is there too,

that his dread of heresy, his fear of false mysticism, and his unmitigated opposition to the teachings of Wyclif and Hus find an explanation. He did not try to legislate evil out of existence. He did not invite secular officials to make themselves custodians of ecclesiastical possessions. He did not attempt to rule out of existence all institutions designed to safeguard the dignity of the clergy, simply because they were misused. The appeal of Gerson was to right reason ; he challenged the consciences of all, princes and prelates, priests and people. Had they heeded him and been willing to accept the rule of life that he both preached and practiced, the Church would have been spared the crisis that came a century after his death and gave rise to the dissensions which are now so difficult to heal.

Such was the position, such the projects and such the worth of Gerson in his day. We take upon ourselves to recall the lesson of his life in the hope that for our own time such an example might not be lost. For, it is only by a spirit of sacrifice kindred to his that the unity and concord that is so hoped for to-day will be attained.

The desire to fit the life and lessons of Gerson into the needs of the Twentieth Century ought, we think, to be justification enough for the present work. The interest that is being taken in the mystical life and which too often has become unbalanced needs to be reminded of the sober teaching of Gerson. It would be difficult to find anywhere ideas that better sum up the whole tradition of Christian Spirituality than what we find in the pages that he wrote. Though these writings of the Chancellor have many times excited the admiration of English writers and have brought from the lips of Faber the declaration that Gerson was « the Saint Thomas of modern spirituality », there is, strangely enough, no study of Gerson as reformer and mystic in the English language.

In French, much has been written in the nature of panegyric, and only a few works stand out for their solidity. Jadart's researches on the origin and family of Gerson have permanent value (1). As a psychological study the work of

(1) Jadart, H., *John Gerson (1363-1429), recherches sur son origine, son village natale et sa famille.* Rheims, 1882.

Lafontaine has certain worth, despite the want of documentation and occasional lapses (1). For Gerson's relationship with his time, the excellent works of Valois cannot be neglected, but in them we lose contact too often with the man and are buried in a mass of political manoeuvres (2). Bourret tells us of the preachings, and Jourdain of the mysticism of the Chancellor (3). But neither writer went beyond the work of dry analysis, and both are antedated.

In German, the work of Schwab still lives, despite the seventy years of its age (4). We do not presume that we can supplant it. But we do hope to be able to supplement it and improve on the treatment which Schwab gave to the reforms and to the mysticism of Gerson. Since he wrote his book, the interest in the Fifteenth Century has grown and has seen the publication of documents that he could not have consulted. There are several points, though they be small, where we have been able to correct him and there are many places where we have filled in the picture he so aptly sketched. The work of Bess (5) on the political theories of Gerson is still valuable, but into this field we hardly propose to enter since that study is being made in a thesis to be presented shortly, we trust, at the Catholic University of Washington.

The plan of the present work is to examine the reform movement and the mysticism of Gerson. These two activities are quite inseparable in him. Neither one can be properly appreciated without its complement. The mysticism of Gerson was the spur that prompted him to attempt a reform in the

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(1) Lafontaine, A., *Jehan Gerson.* Paris, 1906.

(2) Valois, N., *La France et le grand schisme.* 4 vols. Paris, 1796-1902. Id., *Gerson, curé de S. Jean en Greve.* Paris, 1901. Id., *Un nouveau témoignage sur Jeanne d'Arc. Réponse d'un clerc parisien à l'apologie de la Pucelle par Gerson.* Paris, 1907.

(3) Bourret, E., *Essai historique et critique sur les sermons français de Gerson.* Paris, 1858. Jourdain, C., *Doctrina Johannis Gersonii de theologia mystica.* Paris, 1838. Id., *Gerson, Jean,* article in the *Dictionnaire de sciences philosophiques.* Paris, 1875.

(4) Schwab, J. B., *Johannes Gerson, Professor des Theologie und Kanzler der Universität Paris.* Wurzburg, 1856.

(5) Bess, B., *Johannes Gerson und die kirchenpolitichen Parteien Franckreichs vor dem Konzil zu Pisa.* Marburg, 1890.

lives of clergy and people and in his reforms all led back to mysticism. The positive side of his teaching was, in almost every circumstance, directed to make mystics of all, in sense that they lived in the presence and in the love of God. It would be possible to study each circumstance that arose in the life of the Chancellor in the light of his ambition for reform and of his mysticism. But for the sake of clearness it seems better to divide the study into two parts, one of which will be devoted to the biography and the reforms of the man, and the other to his mysticism. The first part will be dominated by the chronological order, each Chapter marking a step in advance, although for the internal disposition of the Chapters the topical or logical order will rule. The second part of the work will be arranged with a viewpoint to logical sequence of ideas.

For the study of the writings of the Chancellor, the edition of his works by Dupin has been used. Doubtful passages have been controlled by comparisons with manuscripts in the libraries of Paris, Tours and Valenciennes. In all three places some attempt was made to discover unprinted and inedited sources. But the fruits of the research were slight. Some few discoveries were made to which we refer in the text, but we do not think them of sufficient import to warrant printing. In the critique of authenticity we have disallowed the title of Gerson to certain writings which Dupin prints as his, — amongst them the *De modo uniendi et reformandi ecclesiam* and the *De concilio unius obedientiae*, — and have established his authorship of the *Letter in Defense of Joan of Arc*. Much of the critique had been done long before we commenced our study and we could do no more than confirm what others had proved.

Courtesy demands that we express here our indebtedness to all who have in any way assisted in the preparation of this book. To Dr Albert De Meyer, Professor of Church History at the University of Louvain, and Editor of the *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* are due our heartiest thanks. Under his inspiration the work was begun and carried on. Had it not been for his generous counsel and constant aid the book would never

have been finished. A word of appreciation must be offered to M. Henri Omont of the Bibliothèque Nationale and M. George Collon of the Municipal Library at Tours for their genial courtesy. We wish also to acknowledge the valuable assistance that was received from Dr James O'Mahony, O. M. Cap., and to thank Rev. John J. Burns for his aid in correcting the proofs in the first part of the volume.

James L. Connolly.

Louvain, *October 20, 1927.*

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CHAPTER I

THE TIMES OF GERSON

A very depressing vista of Medieval Life is opened up in the period (1363-1429) which marks the life-time of John Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris. It was a troubled time when Church and State alike experienced grave crises, and seemed to waver on the edge of disaster. The Church suffered great loss in her prestige : her temporal power had become a title and no reality ; her spiritual authority was hurt by the presence of the Popes at Avignon, and by the outbreak of the Great Western Schism. When rival claimants for the Papacy belittled themselves before Princes, and bartered favor for support, it is not remarkable that the whole Church and her members cried out for reform. In the State which had grown tyrannic in the consciousness of great power, the people in the towns had been many times provoked to rebellion. Democracy was gaining force for the struggle to come, and scholars, and nobles as well, sponsored the spirit of revolt. War and pest broke the ranks of the toilers and sapped their strength. The horrors of the Black Death were many times repeated. Epidemic and plague gleaned where war had reaped. It was a time of calamity, of unrest, of uncertainty, when heresy and superstition stalked abroad. Yet amidst all the gloom there were few to guide the people.

From the See of Peter, scant aid was to come. The prestige of the Papacy had been hurt by the long exile in France. Since the days which saw the condemnation of the Templars, and witnessed the persistent opposition of Pope John XXII to the claims of Louis the Bavarian to the title of Emperor, the catholicity of the Popes of Avignon had been called into question. Germany and England suspected the hand of the French King in all that came from the Curia. Even the controversy waged at the University of Paris against the teaching of John XXII on the Beatific Vision proves how quick men were

to censor the actions of the Pope. All know the evil effect of the Great Western Schism that divided Christianity for forty years, how nationalism dictated the break and sustained the ambitions of an Antipope, how both claimants were at pains to rally every means of support, how the Avignon Pretender attempted to conquer by force of arms the obedience that he could not obtain by right. Add to this that too great stress on the temporalities helped to lessen respect for the Church as a spiritual guide. The period of exile (1305-1377) caused to be developed a system of taxation in detail, that both claimants of the Papacy followed during the time of Schism, to the detriment of their claims of spiritual fatherhood (1). All this served to widen the gap between believer and teacher, between the people and the Pope. So that it is not astounding that at the Councils of Pisa and Constance the claims of the Popes were disregarded, and themselves dethroned. It is reported that an advocate at the Council of Pisa made a play on words with the names Gregory (Gregorius) and Benedict (Benedictus) speaking of the former as the « Erring one » (Errorius) and of Benedict as « Benefictus ». He reflected fully the spirit of his time towards the Popes. The faith of the people kept firm, however, and though some were lacking in respect for the incumbent of the Papal See, they esteemed the office and were at great pains to restore it to its former dignity.

The rising nations of Europe, eager though they were to succeed to the position of Dictator in the policies of the Church, were, each in turn, hampered by internal troubles. From 1380 when Rouen revolted, until 1417, when, as the Chronicler of St. Denys tells us, there was a tide of revolution in all the cities (2), the spirit of revolt grew keener, not alone in France but in all countries. Quarrels amongst the nobles, and of the nobles against the Crown weakened each nation, but especially the Empire and France. Revolutions, which resulted in Kings

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(1) G. Mollat, *La collation des bénéfices ecclésiastiques sous les Papes d'Avignon* (1305-1378), pp. 322-323, Paris, 1921 ; Id., *Les Papes d'Avignon*, 4th ed., pp. 362-385, Paris, 1924 ; *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. IV, p. 212.

(2) *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. VI, p. 202 : « rebelliones plebium contra majores vigebant ».

dethroned, occurred in England, the Empire, Naples and Spain. Kings, in turn, profitted by the growing feeling of national consciousness, and embarked on wars of conquest against the weak. Those who, like William of Occam, Marsilius of Padua, Wiclif and Hus, preached against the right of the Church to hold property, met a ready response from the ruling powers. Men did not hesitate to add ecclesiastical possessions to their own temporal property. Kings longed for a share in the fruits of the ecclesiastical taxes, and the Empire instead of defending the claims of the Church against oppression, was only too ready to have a hand in the loot.

In France, — and France may be taken as typical of the other powers, — Charles V sought to secure the money needed for his wars from the Church and so to relieve the people of their great burden of taxes. By his command the *Songe du Vergier,* — which was a criticism of the organisation of the Church and a defense of the claims of the King to tax the Church, — was written (1). Charles himself was highly instrumental in the starting of the Schism that divided the Church, and he handed on at his death instructions that the course he had taken be maintained. All during the reign of his fear-crazed son, Charles VI, the country was in a constant turmoil of invasion and civil strife, and the « noble Uncles » to whom fell the task of government turned the period of their administration to their own gain. This corruption entered all levels of government, and so great was the seepage of public funds that it became more and more vital to gain control of ecclesiastical revenues (2). Not only that, but it had become the fixed if not written policy of the State to dictate the policies of the Bishops and Cardinals controlling the affairs of the Church, and of the scholars who may be said to have dictated the thought of the time at the University of Paris. From the

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(1) The *Songe du Vergier*, written first in Latin and then translated into French, had great success. The author is unknown. Cfr M. Dubruel, article *Gallicanisme*, in the *Dict. Ap. de la Foi cath.*, II, col. 216. Cfr also G. Bonet-Maury, *Les réformateurs avant la Réformation*, p. 170, Paris, 1904.

(2) C. Kehrmann, *Frankreichs innere Kirchenpolitik* (1378-1409), pp. 13-15, Jena, 1890.

beginning of the Schism until after the Council of Constance, the same effort of the French Crown is discernible, and to the evil of Christianity divided into two camps, succeeded in France the idea of a National Church.

Under such duress, the thought and the beliefs of the people could not but suffer some painful strains ; the surprise is that men did not go to further extremes than they did, driven as they were by despondency and with no guidance. Doubt as to the identity of the Sovereign Pontiff was in the minds of many. Violent attacks against the title of one or other claimant were common, and excited suspicion as to the worthiness of both. Being left thus alone, with little guidance from their ecclesiastical superiors, and with a keen dread, made more vivid by recurring calamities, that the Day of Antichrist was at hand, many of the spiritually-minded were forced to seek religion in their own souls, and were exposed to the exploitation of the charlatans and the misguided (1). Thus we witness extremes of untutored and uncontrolled mysticism bearing a fruitage in heresy and immoral practice. There was, in the north especially, a mysticism in the air. But along with the fine traditions of the Rhine School and of the Brethren of the Common Life, many other movements gained impetus and led the people astray into error and sin. Such organized movements as the Beghards and the Brethren of the Free Spirit had a sad effect upon the morality of the people, for despite their claims to bring about a life of real union with God, they tolerated excesses which the Church had to condemn (2). For the perfect Beghard sin was impossible ; so he was free to do as he pleased in the consciousness that he did well. For him there were no Commandments, nor Fasts to be

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(1) Prophecies were frequent. Cfr L. Pastor, *Histoire des Papes* (Tr. into the French by Furcy Raynaud), vol. I, 5th ed., pp. 166 ff., Paris, 1925. Amongst those who wrote of Antichrist were d'Ailly, Clamanges, Thierry of Nieheim and St. Vincent Ferrier. Cfr L. Salembier, *Le grand schisme d'Occident*, 5th ed., pp. 128-130, Paris, 1921.

(2) H. Denzinger and C. Bannwart, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, nos 398-406. Cfr also H. Delacroix, *Essai sur le mysticisme spéculatif en Allemagne au* XIVe *siècle*, pp. 77-134, Paris, 1899 ; F. Vernet, articles : *Beghards* and *Frères du libre esprit*, in the *Dict. th. Cath.*, vol. II, pp. 528-535 ; vol. VI, pp. 800-809.

observed. These beliefs were repeated over and over, and despite the condemnations of the Church they survived. Simultaneous with these heretical Schools of Mysticism rose the Waldenses and the Flagellanti which were extreme in their Asceticism and kindled new fires of devotion by the rigor of their penances and the extremes of their abandonment (1). Charges of gross immorality were laid against these also. But it was a time when passion ran high and gentle appellations were rare. These movements though they were extreme may be said to form for us the high lights of the period we are to study. They show quite clearly that the religious consciousness of the faithful was by no means asleep, and that the errors of the time were more on the side of excess than of defect.

A view of the conditions within the Church herself explains very well how such teachings and practices could gain a vogue. The people were living in a sort of spiritual desert. Not that they had not devotions ; for we are at the fountain-head of many of the modern devotions of the Church. The History of Art in the Fourteenth Century shows us how thorough a hold the devotions to the Passion of Christ, to the Precious Blood, to the Five Wounds, to the Stations of the Cross, had upon the people of that day (2). The thought of the Seven Sorrows of Mary gave solace to the mental and physical sufferings of many. The observance of the Feast of the Eucharist — *Corpus Christi* — directed the thoughts and the prayers of the faithful, in ever increasing numbers to the Throne of Grace, to the Emmanuel Who out of all the present evil would know how to bring forth good. Under the inspiration of the preaching of Saint Bernardine of Sienna, the sacred Name of Jesus became a center of devotion, and measures were taken to stop the ugly blasphemies that were so frequent on men's

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(1) Gerson wrote and spoke against these two heresies. He was utterly opposed to extreme penances. Cfr *Opera Omnia*, Edition of Dupin, Antwerp, 1706, II, 660-664, *Tractatus contra sectam se flagellantium*. All future references to the writings of Gerson will be to the edition of Dupin unless otherwise indicated.

(2) E. Male, *L'Art religieux de la fin du Moyen Age en France*, pp. 75-118, Paris, 1908 ; P. Pourrat, *La Spiritualité chrétienne*, vol. II : *Le Moyen Age*, 3rd ed., pp. 481-488, Paris, 1921.

lips, and against which Gerson himself never ceased to preach (1). Devotions such as these could not, however, supply the need of religious instruction, nor erase from the lives of the people the gross superstitions that they entertained. The preaching and the good-example of the Clergy alone could do that, and these were somewhat lacking. Left to themselves, it is not surprising if the faithful became gross in their pleasures and indifferent to the demands which religion put upon them, especially when there were not wanting priests who set a mark for indifference, and a low level for grossness. The Sacraments of the Church were neglected or misused, superstitious interpretations as to their value were common, and the sincerity of the ministers of the Gospel was called into question. Many people judged the truth of the Gospel by the manner of life of those who preached it. If the priest did not live up to the ideals he preached, his ministry was scoffed at. The people erred indeed, but it was more for want of guidance than for any lack of good-will.

And the clergy upon whom descended the care of the people, these were for the greater part men who had entered upon their ministry for the living that they would derive from it, and many were, to their sorrow, undeceived by the pittance that they received in the form of tithes, which was all that the Benefice-System left to them. The education they had received was insufficient for the responsibilities that were placed upon them, and many priests did not know the prayers that they were bound to recite themselves, and to teach to the people. Local educational systems had suffered a breakdown with the founding and spread of the Universities (2). To meet the need for priests after the Black Death and successive plagues

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(1) Thus, III, 889-890, *Considérations sur le péché de blasphème ;* III, 243-246, *Tractatus contra fœdam tentationem blasphemiæ.* Cfr III, 889 : « Le pechié de blasphème est grand cause des pestilences et des guerres, et des famines, et aultres tribulacions en Chrestienté et par especial ou noble Royaume de France qui a le nom d'estre très chrestien et toutesfois, dont c'est douleur, ce détestable pechié y est acoustumé plusque ailleurs... » The sermons of Gerson likewise contain many protests against the use of blasphemy.

(2) *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. I, pp. 84-86. Cfr P. Feret, *La Faculté de théologie de Paris et ses docteurs les plus*

had thinned out the ranks of the clergy, postulants were accepted and ordained who had not the slightest degree of spirituality, and who used their ministry as a means of gathering money. It was not at all infrequent to see clerics aping the dress and the manners of their superiors, and scraping together all their means to secure for themselves the luxuries that they envied in the lives of the Prelates and nobles. Great hope for reform was placed in the students who issued from the Universities, but these more often than not were ambitious in a bad sense and apt to sacrifice their ideals for position. Moreover, the attractions that the life ot the city held out to them became for many a source of scandal. Turbulent conduct replaced the calm of life that had been acquired in the country homes of most of those who went to the University to study for the priesthood, and there were those who left the University more addicted to feasting and drinking than to the pursuit of knowledge. If the Occamistic Philosophy which was commonly taught at the time may be called the triumph of individuality, there were some whose ideals as well as their ideas sought originality. Add to this a last straw — the abandonment by many of the clergy, particularly those in parish-life, of the obligation to lead celibate lives. It was often said that avarice was the cause of the Schism in the Church ; Gerson looked more closely at the evil and laid the blame on « self-love » (1).

The Religious Orders were a little better than the Secular Clergy in some respects. Fidelity to obedience and to the demands of their Rule was for many a source of strength. Some of the Orders, the Carthusians particularly, wore through all this period a reputation for virtue that was deserved (2). But there were other convents where the Rule was neglected, and the Community-life instead of being a solace and a protection became a source of temptation and harm. The Fourteenth Cen-

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célèbres, vol. IV, p. 34, Paris, 1897 ; L. Dacheux, *Un réformateur catholique à la fin du* XV^e^ *siècle, Jean Geiler de Kaysersberg*, p. 136, Paris, 1876.

(1) III, 1382 ; L. Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 161.

(2) Alb. Ehrhard, *Das Mittelalter und seine Entwickelung*, pp. 294-296, Mainz, 1908.

tury saw many attempted reforms of the monasteries fail, and from almost all those who started an uplift harsh censures of existing conditions have come down to us. It is as easy for us as for them to overlook the good of that day ; but we must not forget the monasteries famed for learning and piety, just as we must not forget that there were in parish-life many priests known for their sobriety and zeal. The evil repute of those who lapsed has become better known than the good done by those who kept their ideals high, and the reformers themselves, such as Ruysbroeck, Groote, Nider and Clamanges often lost sight of the good in their determination to root out the bad (1). So that room must be allowed for a deal of exaggeration, the while that we admit that the tones of the picture are gloomy enough.

Chiefly responsible for these conditions were those who sat in the high places of the Church, laymen and clerics, Prince-Bishops and Bishops, who were in most instances more Princes and lay, than cleric and Bishop in their mentality, who maintained at all costs a system that was guaranteed to fill their purses and permit to them all manner of finery. Lay incumbency in the Bishoprics and Prebendaries of the Church was again becoming general as in the time of the Investiture Quarrel. So frequent and great was the recourse had by the Nobility to the resources of the Church that in some instances eccleciastical edifices were entitled : « *Des Hôpitaux de Noblesse* ». Many were the nobles who received the fruits of benefices and yielded a pittance to the incumbent in the See, or Monastery, as the case might be. But the clerics themselves were not slow to learn the lesson, and soon there was keen competition between cleric and layman, and Bishop and Prince, to see who could garner the most benefices, and who could surpass by the splendor of his retinue. The Popes of Avignon had been

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(1) A.-W. D'Aygalliers, *Ruysbroeck l'Admirable*, 2nd ed., pp. 120-125, quotes at some length from the works of Ruysbroeck and Groote, to indicate what were the conditions amongst the clergy and religious ; A. Auger, *Études sur les mystiques des Pays-Bas au Moyen Age*, p. 262 ff. Brussels, 1902, also gives details. For Clamanges, cfr *Opera Omnia*, edited by John Martin Lydius, Lyons, 1613, especially *De corrupto statu Ecclesiae*, pp. 4-28 ; For Nider, cfr *De reformatione religiosorum libri tres*, Paris, 1512 ; Antwerp, 1611.

hopelessly unable to correct these abuses which were in part their own making, and during the time when the cause of the Pope of Avignon was endangered in France, Clement VII and Benedict XIII were not slow to bolster up the fidelity of their supporters by generous grants (1). The Cardinals were well supplied with benefices in France, and were loath to permit any change that would imperil their prestige. Already before the outbreak of the Great Western Schism there had been need of reform in the Church but for want of a spirit of sacrifice, affairs were let go from bad to worse. It might almost be said that the Church had none to whom she could look for aid.

One Institution did stand out to remedy conditions : that was the University of Paris, which was then at the height of her power. Herself the Intellectual Mother of many Popes from the days of Innocent III until the coming of Pope Martin V, she had been showered with favors by the Holy See and elevated to a position respected by all the Church. The opinion of her Doctors had often been consulted by the Popes and their learning requisitioned for the suppression of heresy, until in the course of time the University came to regard herself as the Protectress of the Faith. Many had come from distant lands to study in Paris; and to meet the need of learning she sent out her Doctors to man the new Universities of Prague, Vienna, Erfurt, Heidelberg and Cologne. When the Schism broke in the Church, she was an Institution respected throughout Christendom. Her first response to the appeals of Pope Urban VI and his rival Clement VII was to remain neutral, and though the Duke of Anjou forced a declaration of obedience to the Avignon claimant, to whom the natural sympathies of Gallican Nation went, the University was never full-hearted in her support of the cause of Avignon, and she took up the task of leading the nation back to peace and union (2). Step by

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(1) II, 14 in a *Tract on the Schism*, Gerson remarks : « Quod per Nuncium Apostolicum qui novissime venit, fecit multa offerre domino regi et aliis super declaratione voluntatis suae ». This is said of Pope Benedict XIII ; Salembier, *o. c.*, pp. 155-156.

(2) Hefele-Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles*, vol. VI, part II, p. 1147, quotes from address presented by the University to the King, June 30,

step she led France and the other nations along the way, until at the Council of Constance she assumed a dominant role and dictated the procedure and the terms for the settlement of the Schism. Outside France her prestige had suffered a little by her allegiance to the cause of the Avignon Pope. It was natural that men in England and the Empire would suspect her motives. Yet her opinions were respected and in most instances followed.

In France particularly, the University claimed and exercised great authority, and that even over the secular power. Circumstances aided her indeed, for the King was out of his senses, the Royal Household disturbed by jealousies, and the voices of the commoners rising against taxation and oppression, made the work of an intermediary all the more necessary. The University was regarded as the « Daughter of the King », and in that capacity she heard the protests of the people and admonished the King and his Nobility. But her claim was not undisputed. The Duke of Orleans rebuked those who came to him with a message from the University that « he settle his difficulties with the House of Burgundy so that the country might enjoy the peace that was necessary for reform », with an admonition that they keep to the theory of governing and leave the practice to him (1). In the Chronicle of Saint Denis, the same idea is reflected. The Chronicler writes that some people objected that it was not right for theorizers to attempt to do the work of men skilled in the ways of government (2). However, the University claimed and exercised the privilege, and as long as the government was divided and Parliament did not protest, she dominated the life of France. But her glory was soon to decline as the burghers felt their strength, and

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1394, « Depuis seize ans, l'Université n'avait cessé de s'employer à procurer le rétablissement de l'unité ecclésiastique ; mais elle s'était heurtée à beaucoup d'obstacles, surtout pendant la jeunesse du roi ». Cfr *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. II, p. 132 ff.

(1) *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. III, p. 314 : « sicut nec in casu fidei ad concilium milites evocaretis, sic nec in casibus bellicis debetis vos immiscere.... etsi filia regis Universitas vocetur, tamen de regimine regni ipsam intromittere non decet ». Cfr *Chronique de Monstrelet*, ed. by Douet D'Arcq, vol. I, p. 121.

(2) *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. V, p. 4.

the time was already close at hand when the handiest weapon of the University — the suspension of her Classes — would be inefficacious against the obstinacy of the Princes and the obduracy of the Parliament.

It was chiefly in matters of Faith that the University held a predominant position. She set herself as the censor of doctrine, and the opponent of heresy. It was she who formed the bulk of the Theologians; men trained at Paris went out to the new Universities and formed the minds of their pupils along the same lines as their own training had been. The University examined preachers and gave them the right to address the people. She was the one who breasted the attacks of the Religious Orders against the privileges of the Secular Clergy. She was the one to censor the teaching of Pope John XXII and bring about the definition by Pope Benedict XII on the Beatific Vision. In 1387, a condemnation of the doctrine of John of Montesono resulted in the expulsion of the Dominican Order from the University-Center, and the mentality of the Doctors is seen in the declaration which those who defended Montesono had to sign before they were admitted to teach or preach at Paris. That the University of Paris « cannot err in matters of Faith and Morals » was clearly stated (1). Gerson shows this same mentality when he writes that there should be but one School of Theology for all Christendom, so as to guarantee the purity of the teaching. For him, of course, this School would be none other than Paris (2).

Given this prestige, it is not difficult to appreciate how the influence of the University and her Doctors would be great, not alone in France but in all the Christian Nations. Thus in the Reform-Movement she took a predominant role. Many were the theories that were expressed in the Halls and the Convents that made up the University (3). From such men as

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(1) Denifle-Chatelain, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, vol. IV, p. 56, n° 1781 ; Ibid., III, p. 486 ff., n^{os} 1557-1583.

(2) I, 105, *Letter to students in the College of Navarre.* Cfr II, 149, in the course of a sermon before the King, for the Peace and Union of the Church, Gerson says : « Nota quod cavendum est ne mala theologia et curiosa hanc Universitatem invadat sicut in Anglia et in Praga ».

(3) As many as ten thousand responses were made to the request of the University in 1394, for suggestions as to how to end the Schism. In

Peter Cardinal d'Ailly who was the instructor of John Gerson and from Nicholas of Clamanges who was his friend came an impulse to improve the preaching, and to afford to priests and people alike a means of better religious instruction. But amongst most of the reformers efforts were critical and destructive rather than positive and edifying. It may be that such a state of mind was inevitable from the Philosophy that was being taught and which was chiefly negative. At all events, the bulk of the reformatory measures were fated to miscarry, stifled almost at their inception by the press of selfish interests, or condemned by their inability to attract a following. One of the great reasons for the want of success of projects of reform was that even those who preached the reform did not always practice it. The need of a man of conviction grew more urgent with the passing of the years and the persistency of the Schism.

Any sketch of the times of Gerson would be insufficient without a glimpse at the Economic, the Social, and the Artistic Life of the period. The wretched condition in the Economic Life of France can be readily surmised since the country was living through the last stages of the Hundred Years War. The march of trade had been many times interrupted, the townspeople were in the shambles of taxation, the country was impoverished by endless invasions and pillaging at the hands of licensed brigands (1). Thus to the depression caused by the Schism was added the stress of poverty and a sad inanition that verged upon despair. The villages were deserted ; the towns were in a turmoil. Taxes collected for the Kingdom were turned to the advantage of private adventures, and the Duke of Anjou used the occasion of ruling during the minority of Charles VI to lay up a store of wealth to support him in his realm of Naples. The Duke of Orleans, brother of the King,

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all of these there was much conformity, but the number may indicate the vitality of the problem in the University.

(1) *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. VI, p. 64 : « predictorum exsuperabat vesanium quorumdam nobiliorum et ignobilium dampnatorum... multitude maxima, que in baratrum desperationis deducta, et neglecta animadversione divina et humana, id solum excogitabat, ut ubique predas, stragas, et incendia exerceret sine misericordia... »; A. Coville, *Les Cabochiens et l'ordonnance de 1413*, p. 84, Paris, 1888.

was not more scrupulous in his administration of the public funds, and the theft of the proceeds of the taxes in 1404 enriched him and his followers at the expense of the country. Tired of the oppression and the endless warfare, the townspeople took measures for their own protection. The Duke of Burgundy whose interest lay in the cultivation of commerce between his dominions in the north and the City of Paris was the friend of the bourgeois, and they in turn sustained him in his quarrels against the Duke of Orleans, who represented the aristocracy. The guilds of Paris gained such strength that they were permitted to protect themselves, and the slightest hint of danger was sufficient reason for them to close their streets with heavy chains (1). The revolt of Etienne Marcel in an earlier day, and that of the Cabochiens in 1413 were prompted by the necessity under which the merchant class found themselves to protect their interests.

But despite these trials through which the country was passing, the people, those of the city especially, lived in a gay fashion. The Kermesses, the Spectacles, the Drama and the Dancing gave an outlet to the pent-up emotions. And though the city was filled with sickness, and beggars were everywhere in evidence, the merchant and the townsman pursued their pleasures and hoarded their wealth in indifference to it all. It was a time of deep misery, yet it was a time when pleasures were of a low order. But that the people were not altogether degenerate in their conduct is witnessed to by the revolt of the bourgeois in 1413, when an attempt was made to dictate to the dissolute Dauphin, and to the Court, the manner of life that was expected of them. « They feared, » says the Chronicler of Saint Denis, « lest he (the Dauphin) fall into the same malady as his father, to the great shame of the Realm » (2). But the objections of the people were in vain, as had been those

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(1) Fr. Funck-Brentano, *Le Moyen Age*, 4th ed., p. 460, Paris, 1919 ; *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. IV, p. 180 ; A. Coville, *o. c.*, pp. 90-91.

(2) *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. V, pp. 16-24 ; Cfr vol. V, pp. 234-236. A secret meeting of the King's Council was held on Dec. 1st 1413 when it was decided that, for the good of the Dauphin, some of the evil influence had to be removed from the Court.

of the University before. The Augustinian Friar Jacques Legrange could storm as he would against the morals of the Queen and her Court. Not repentance but resentment attended his efforts. Eustache de Pavilly, speaking in the name of the University in 1413 had no greater success. Denunciations did no good, and the courage that it took to face the Court and recount the list of its crimes was wasted. The one thing that could be said in favor of the Court-life was that it was generous in rewarding service. For the interests of the country and those of the Church it did nothing but harm.

It is not surprising then, that amongst the people, in reaction to the physical and mental woes that hemmed them in, pleasures were rude and conscience was sluggish. Under extremes of sorrow men easily lapse from their ideals, and with none to correct or advise them, they run rapidly to extremes of degradation. Something of this kind was happening in France at the end of the Fourteenth Century. The people were facing the worst realities that life offers, with none or but few of the comforts to aid them, and without fine ideals to inspire them.

This state of affairs is reflected clearly in the Art of the time. The mysticism that had built the Cathedrals, and adorned them with statuary seemed lost. Churches were destroyed and left in ruins rather than built up (1). What work was done in stone was dull and heavy, and portrays the spirit of helplessness that prevailed. But under the influence of the Theatre a change was to come, which early in the Fifteenth Century had already begun. Decadence in art had, to be sure, followed decline in religious practice. Drabness of life had, indeed, deadened the artistic perceptions for a time. But under the impulse of inspiration gained in the Mystery Plays where were seen acted the scenes of the Life and Passion of Christ, artists were moved to express more clearly the human in art (2). It

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(1) H. Denifle, *La désolation des églises en France*, vol. II : *Pendant la Guerre de Cent Ans*, Macon, 1899 ; Cfr also, *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. VI, p. 64.

(2) E. Male, *o. c.*, p. VIII, and 69 : « les vierges, les apôtres, les saints n'ont plus rien qui les distingue de la foule... Ou les artistes ont-ils trouvé l'exemple d'une telle audace ? Au théâtre, évidemment, car il

was not to be long before the statues were to smile and new character and new beauty be found.

Such is the setting of the life of John Charlier, called John Gerson : a period of sorrow into which he entered with words of comfort, a period of turbulence into which he tried to instill a calm, a period of doubt and disillusionment into which he strove to bring convictions. Gerson's time was one of undisciplined and untutored freedom, and he aimed to teach it the principle of authority. It was a time of selfishness to which he was to hold out a lesson of love.

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est clair que les acteurs ne jouaient pas leur rôle la tête entourée d'un nimbe ».

CHAPTER II

HOME LIFE AND FAMILY SPIRIT

The traveller of to-day, as he goes down the valley of the river Aisne from the town of Rethel towards the town of Barby near by, passes through a rolling country, the physical characteristics of which have not much changed since the Fourteenth Century. It has always been a farm-country as far back as can be remembered, and while to-day cultivation of the land is not nearly as intensive as it was in the days of Gerson, there is yet ample indication that the character and occupation of the habitants is much according to tradition.

At a distance of about two and a half miles from the town of Rethel, where the road crosses the rivulet known as the Bourgeron, along the banks of which weeping willows and poplars grow, the traveller will come upon an iron cross, set up to mark the site of the chapel of Saint Martin (1). This chapel served for many years as the church of the town of Gerson (2), an old hamlet long since abandoned, but which, at the time we study covered the hillside near by with modest dwellings, that stretched along the road from the present cross to the limits of the town of Barby. Gerson was for long a prosperous agricultural settlement. It had almost equal importance with the town of Barby, and in all probability received its Charter of Town-Organization at the same time, in the year 1264. At any rate, we know that, in the year 1411, the town of Gerson had all the officials : mayor, judges, etc. (3)

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(1) H. Jadart, *Jean de Gerson*, pp. 49 ff. Jadart used to great advantage the inventories and charters appertaining to the Benedictine Monastery of St. Remi at Rheims. His work sheds a very interesting light on the origins of the towns of Barby and Gerson.

(2) Mass was celebrated in the Chapel at rare intervals. For their Sunday-Mass townspeople of Gerson had to go to Barby, where was the Parish Church.

(3) « La ville de Jerson (avait) maieur, echevins, et autres officiers en justice qui ont cognoissance de toutes les causes, cas et proces. » Thus Jadart, *o. c.*, p. 61, cites documents of the Fonds St. Remi.

to be found in those country-towns which enjoyed a degree of local government through favor of their overlord (1).

It was in this town that Arnulphus Charlier, the father of John Charlier of Gerson, lived. Like all who dwelt there he was a farmer, and he lived from the fruit of his toil in the field. He was happy in his marriage, having as his wife Elizabeth Chardenière, daughter of one of the oldest families of the place (2). By her he had twelve children, of which the oldest was John, later called John Charlier of Gerson, or more commonly John Gerson (3).

When Arnulphus Charlier began his wedded life, a comparative peace reigned over the country. Though the Hundred Years War was still being fought, the center of operations was far to the west, and southwest. True, the English and Navarrists, to maintain their positions already won, kept a garrison of troops in the fortress of Rethel, but their possession was not contested and the country was left at peace (4).

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(1) The Priory of Rethel, dependent on the Monastery of St. Remi, owned the land upon which the town of Gerson was.

(2) *Chartulary A (St. Remi)* which is a copy of the original grant of land to the Priory of Rethel mentions a « poncardus dictus Chardeniers » as dwelling on the land at the time. JADART, *o. c.*, p. 68.

(3) III, 767. *Letter of Consolation* written in verse by Gerson to his brother the Benedictine at Rheims :

Monice, quem mihi dat fratrem nature sequendum,
Nostri sint generis quae monumenta vides
Arnulpho Charlier, cui nupsit Elizabeth olim.
Gerson origo fuit, advena voce sonans.
Dotavit Deus hos bissena prole, puellae
Septenae numero, quinque fuere mares.
Primus Theologus, Monachi tres, mortuus alter
Infans, et nupsit Filia sola viro.
Frater Petre, rapit te mors, et te soror, Agnes,
Infantes, vivit purus uterque Deo.
Aegra Jabina soror vivens mala sustinuisti
Jugiter hinc moriens reddita dona capis.
Chara Soror Raulina, vale, quae commeruisti
Consors esse Jesu, cujus eras famula.
Hospita pauperibus, et mystica Martha fuisti.
Te vocat inde Jesus, tu benedicta veni.

Marion is mentioned by Gerson, III, 839 ; Poncette is known by a letter which she wrote to her brothers. Mss. lat. n° 990, fol. 98-99, Bibliothèque Nationale.

(4) JADART, *o. c.*, p. 71.

The monks under whose control was the land on which the inhabitants of Gerson lived, were quite generous with their dependents; so Charlier was able to rear his family in modest comfort, and even to save a little (1).

Of the twelve children, all told, born in the family of Arnulphus Charlier, two, — Peter and Agnes — died as babies. Of the remaining ten children, six were girls and four were boys. We do not know the dates of the birth of each and every one of these, nor can one be sure of names of all. John, with whom we shall have to do, was the oldest, being born on the 14 of December 1363 (2). The girls of the family were named-according to the brief indications found in the works of Gerson himself, Marion, Jabina, Raulina, Martha, Benedicta and Poncette (3). The boys, — and here is an peculiar circumstance, — received with one exception the name of John. There was John who became the Chancellor, John who entered the Order of the Benedictines at Rheims, and John who in later life was to become Prior in the new Monastery of the Celestines of Lyons. Nicholas was the name of the third brother. Though there was somewhat of a gap between the ages of Gerson and his two younger brothers, Nicholas and John, they were to be very much together in later life, and to form between them a bond of affection. But in the home of the Charliers there was a strong family spirit. Under the splendid example of the father and mother whose concord was most complete, and whose perfect union of mind and of heart brought mutual happiness, the children were properly started in life; and whether it was on the farm with their tasks, in the little chapel-school with their studies and prayers, or in their play, a spirit of interdependence prevailed (4).

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(1) In a *Dialogue on the Excellence of Virginity*, composed for his sisters in 1408, Gerson advises them that neither he nor his brothers would claim any part of the family heritage « qui doit estre suffisant pour vostre vie », III, 840.

(2) In 1428, Gerson says that he would begin his sixty-ninth year on December 14, cfr III, 760.

(3) III, 767-768, cfr above.

(4) In 1408, his sisters address Gerson : « Frère germain, par lignage charnel, mais plus par espirituel ; car vostre exhortacion, apres la grace de Dieu, et la sainte institucion de nos bons père et mère... nous avons

Two features of the family life of the Charliers are worthy of note. They are — the enduring affection that knit the family into a close union of sympathy and understanding, and secondly, — the place which religion held in the life of the home. Not many indications have come down to us of the early training and manner of life of the children, but we may glean from the writings of Gerson and from the letters which were exchanged between members of the family, some meager hints as to their home-life. These brief glimpses of their happiness may afford us an insight into what in any age might be considered a blessed existence, and which in the late Middle Ages was an ideal of good-living. It may be of interest to lend close attention to the home-spirit of the Charliers for it throws a very bright light upon what is commonly known as a Dark Age.

From the first, father and mother worked for the welfare of the family. Gerson himself informs us that in order to send him to school, his father risked his little fortune, and infers as well that his sisters made the way clear for him by their self-sacrificing zeal (1). All of the sisters, save one, lived constantly with their parents, and Marion who had married, returned home with her two boys after the premature death of her husband (2). There she co-operated with her sisters in works of prayer, and with them she gave herself to the project of helping on the training of her brothers for the priestly ministry. Gerson himself was the first to go away. When the lessons of the Village *Curé* had well enough prepared him, he entered the monastery-school of St. Remy at Rheims (3). There he progressed until the age of fourteen,

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renoncé à tout mariage mortel, et devant et après, pour acquérir plus convenablement le mariage de celui fils du souverain Roy. » III, 805, *Spiritual Dialogue of Gerson with his sisters.*

(1) III, 805, « puisque nos bons parens père et mère ont exposé jadis leurs biens communes pour moi apprendre la sainte escripture ». Cfr Feret, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 225; A. Lafontaine, *Jehan Gerson*, p. 9, Paris, 1906: « Gerson, en effet, était pénétré de cette idée que la famille est une société sacrée, qu'il y a entre les parents et les enfants, les frères et les sœurs, une solidarité indestructible. »

(2) III, 839.

(3) Dom G. Marlot, *Histoire de la ville cité, et université de Reims*, vol. IV, p. 151, Reims, 1846.

when came the parting from home. He was to go to the University of Paris and to enter the College of Navarre. It was the sorrow of all that he should go. He had himself entertained other ideas (1). But, as the years rolled by, and news of his successes came home to them, their hearts were gladdened. Then came the turn of Nicholas, when he, too, had run the gamut of the local schooling, and, as his brother was nearing the end of his training, he set out for the University, and was inscribed as a student of Navarre in the year 1391 (2). A few years later, the youngest boy left also, and then were three of them living far from home.

In this circumstance, the mother sent to her boys, — the younger ones, — an excellent letter of counsel, which, as an expression of Christian Ideals, is a souvenir of great value (3). She tells how great is her concern for their advancement in virtue. There is no mention of wordly success. Her strongest appeal is based on the love she bears them and her trust in their fidelity to her to do nothing that would be contrary to her wish and their early training. « May you love God », she tells them, « with all your heart and all your mind, so much so that you will never consent to do evil... Be pure and clean of body and soul as becomes young men who are desirous of entering the church, and children who have such examples of a good life from their eight brothers and sisters... My good children, think often that you are beside me, that you see me and hear me speak, and thus do, in the presence of God, when you are alone, as you would do if you were near me and under my eyes. But also do for me as I do for you, that is to say, pray devoutly and ardently for me, as I do, even with tears, for you. You would be unnatural, if you forgot me. — and God does not wish that... Pray diligently to God that He pardon me my misdeeds, and that He may receive me in his glorious company and that there I may see you. Amen. »

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(1) Gerson had planned to become a Carthusian, cfr III, 745.

(2) J.-B. Schwab, *Johannes Gerson*, p. 56, quotes : Launoi, *Regii Navarrae Gymnasii Paris. Historia*, vol. IV, p. 514, Paris, 1677.

(3) This letter was edited by Jadart, *o. c.*, pp. 119-121, from Mss. lat., 990, fol. 98-99, Bibliothèque Nationale.

« Dear children think also of your good father... who has taken so great trouble to advance you in the service of God. Take as an example, your good sisters, and pray for them, devoutly, for they do not forget you. » She thus adopts as her main argument the union of mind and the ideals that were theirs in the family circle of Gerson, and cites the happy home life as the means of keeping two young adventurers into the realm of Philosophy and Science mindful of the great realities of life and of their duties to God.

Father and mother must thus have wielded a strong influence in the mental and moral formation of their children. Devoted to each other and to their children as the mother reminds her boys in the letter quoted above, they turned every thing to advantage in the effort to make their offspring simple in their habits, unselfish in their wishes and strong in their faith. Indeed it was upon a vivid conception of the Presence of God that the whole structure of the family life of the Charliers was built. Each day was offered from the beginning to the service of God. All the circumstances that arose, good or bad, were regarded through the eye of Faith as coming from the Hand of the Heavenly Father. Sorrow and joy, pain and happiness found their *raison d'être* and their explanation in the Divine Will. The father of the family from the time Gerson was a child roused in the receptive mind of the lad an appreciation of the Love that God bears for man as proved by the Sufferings of Christ. Gerson himself tells with such feeling that it cannot but have been personal to him, the story of a man, who, appealing to the affection of his son, used to stretch out his arms against the wall and cry out to him : « See, my boy, how the God who made you and saved you, was crucified and died » (1). This, we know from a later reference, was Gerson's father. As a youth, Gerson was made to look to God for everything and receive all as from the Hand of God. On bended knee, he was wont to accept what favors were given him, and the thought of the Presence of God stimulated his

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(1) « Vide, fili mi, quia sic fuit crucifixus et mortuus Deus tuus, qui te fecit et salvavit. Mansit hoc exemplar puero... Benedictus Pater iste pius », IV, 386.

conduct throughout the day (1). Not a day passed when the Holy Scriptures were not read or recited in the home; and one of the assertions that rises oftenest to the lips of Gerson in later life is that since his boyhood he was acquainted with the wealth of wisdom that is contained in the Holy Book (2). At an early age he was destined for the Church, his father entertaining hopes that all of his children would so dedicate their lives. This is seen particularly in a passage of Gerson's writing which speaks of the testimony of his father to the happiness he felt at the edifying lives of his daughters. « Thanks be to God », said the parent, « that (they) love God, fear sin, fast one day a week, and recite all the Hours of the Blessed Virgin and that Marion has joined them » (3). Since thus his hopes had been realized in his children, the father having first made secure the reasonable support of his offspring, left home and spent the last three years of his life in the monastery of Saint Remi at Rheims, where his second son was living. There he died, according to the records of the monastery, on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, September 14, 1404, and was buried in the Abbey Church (4).

Gerson tells us that his mother was a « Saint Monica » (5). How keen must have been her influence upon him during the few brief yet impressionnable years when he was at home with her! What an inspiration she must have been to him that he would retain through life such a sentiment of her holiness. Like most good mothers, little is known of her. However she has left the letter quoted above that breathes a deep spirit of religion and the love of God. Add to that the fact that her daughters with one accord took up the religious

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(1) « Vivit ille, cui adhuc puerula suadebant parentes, ut si poma, si nuces, vel cetera talia habere vellet, genuflecteret, et illa a Domino Deo elevatis peteret manibus », III, 463. « This indicates the manner in which the Charliers lived in the presence of God.

(2) « ab infantia enim sacras litteras novit » says Gerson of himself, I, 131, cfr also III, 220.

(3) III, 839.

(4) Schwab, o. c., p. 57, gives date of death of the Father as prior to 1401. But cfr P. Tarbe, *Les sépultures de l'église St-Remi de Reims*, p. 20. Rheims, 1842.

(5) III, 745. Letter of Gerson to his Brother John shortly after the latter entered the Celestines.

life, that her sons all entered the ministry, and we can form a partial appreciation of her strength of character and her religious zeal (1). Elizabeth Charlier had lived to see all her children happy in the service of God when she was called in the year 1401 to her reward (2).

The sisters of Gerson are much better known to us. From many sources the story of their devout lives has come down to us. In a spirit of sacrifice, to help along the training of their brothers for the priesthood, and also because they were drawn themselves to religion, all of the sisters of Gerson lived virginal lives. Matrimony and the quest of worldly love and honor had no charm for them. Their greatest happiness was to receive some spiritual aid, some suggestion to further their advance in communion with God. As children they had learned to depend upon the prudence and the learning of their oldest brother, and he, as he made progress in his studies, delighted to share his knowledge with them. Already in the home, Gerson had begun the work that was to characterize his life, of educating the people for a more perfect understanding of their faith, and a more intelligent following of its precepts, and when he left to go to Paris, he formed the resolution of continuing by letter the habit he had acquired of standing sponsor for the spiritual progress of the members of his household (3). It is possible that in the twenty years that lapsed from the time of his departure from home in 1377 until 1397 when he went north to Bruges, to assume the duties of Dean of the Church of Saint Donatian, he had never returned to his home. But as he advanced along the ways of knowledge, and as the strength of his character began to unfold, he used to ponder often on the happy life of those at home, and was anxious to keep up the family spirit. His sisters too, were filled with joy, on hearing at rare intervals

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(1) Later in life Gerson was to urge upon preachers as a means for the Reform of the Church that they preach on the duties of mothers to train their children, III, 1426, *Sermon on St. Bernard.*

(2) Dom G. Marlot, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 151, quotes the epitaph that was placed over the grave of Elizabeth Charlier. The tombstone may still be seen in the church of Barby, where it was placed in 1881, when a memorial chapel to Gerson was inaugurated.

(3) III, 829-830.

the story of his successes, how he had immediately won high standing at the College of Navarre, how his professors had taken a deep interest in his welfare and were sketching for him a magnificent vista of opportunity, how his fame as a preacher was noised abroad, how he became the spokesman of his college, how he was appointed to a Commission that went to defend the faith at Avignon, and how he assumed a position of grave responsibility when he was appointed Chancellor of the University of Paris. They had reverenced him as a youth, but now as the years went by and wisdom was added to him, they learned to depend implicitly upon his guidance, and to seek his counsel on all the affairs of their life.

Gerson did not turn from this responsibility. Rather he sought it out. For he had believed, and the conviction was to grow upon him with age, that the call to the perfect life was not limited to a closed circle of cloistered souls, nor to Bishops and priests alone. For him, all of the flock inasmuch as they believed, and participated in the gifts of the Church, inasmuch as they received in the Sacraments the strength and life of the Holy Spirit, had the call and the means to rise to the heights of sanctity (1). In this state of mind, he warmly seconded the ambition of his sisters to enter into a religious life. But because of the bond of affection that kept them together, and made them rely on one another, doubtless too, because of his knowledge of the difficulties from without, by reason of the disorder of the times, and from within, because of laxness in the observance of the rule that did harm in many communities, he advised that they realize their ideal at home (2). So the sisters embarked upon an endeavor unique at any time,

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(1) « alia pars contemplationis est, quae principaliter tendit ad Dei amorem, et ad sapiendum suam bonitatem, sine magna inquisitione clarioris cognitionis, quam est talis de vera fide quae data est eis, aut certe inspirata. Et ad hanc contemplationem possunt pertingere simplices personae... », III, 547. « Hanc enim species contemplationis adipisci et conscendere fas habent etiam ipsae mulierculae et idiotae fide litteris, praeposita fide simplici et plerumque facilius quam viri magno ingenio et litteris sacris praediti », I, 62, cfr III, 426.

(2) III, 829-841, *Sermon on Virginity*, written from Bruges before 1401. Gerson advises his sisters to live at home and not to marry. In 1408 he could write : « nous, vos cinq suers, avons renoncié à tout mariage mortel », III, 805.

of a religious life at their own family hearth. There under the eyes of their parents they carried out, in recitation of the office each day, in fasting, praying and acts of sacrifice, the ideal of the community life. The Beguines had somewhat of the same spirit, and it was no doubt from the knowledge of their manner of life that the inspiration came (1). It must have been a great happiness for the parents of these young girls to witness their progress in virtue, and to behold their zeal not alone for themselves but for the welfare of all in the district. We have two instances of this contentment, — the letter of the mother to the boys at Paris, telling then to « take their good sisters as their example », — and the commentary of the father, mentioned above, indicating the manner of their lives and his gratitude to God that they lived so (2).

These girls must have exercised along with their life of prayer a very efficacious lay-apostolate if we can judge by their having consulted at various times the wisdom of their brother for the guidance of some soul with which they had come into contact (3). In one of his letters Gerson recalls having sent them three treatises of a highly practical nature. These, he had composed for the assistance of such as had to educate simple folk in the truths of religion (4). They were his writings on the *Commandments*, on *Temptations*, and on the *Manner of distinguishing Mortal from Venial Sin* (5). These formed, as far as we can judge, the beginnings of the spiritual lectures of Gerson to his sisters. As time went on, and he had progressed further in the mystic life, he was able to afford them a more substantial food, and inspire and

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(1) F. Vernet, artic. *Beghards, Béguines hétérodoxes*, in the *Dict. th. Cath.*, vol. II, col. 528-529. The Beguines took temporary vows of Chastity and Obedience. They could quit the life at any time. As to the vow of Poverty some took that also, but the majority of those who became Beguines were women of means.

(2) III, 839.

(3) III, 806, Sisters ask advice « affinque nostre colloqucion puisse profiter aux autres ». Cfr III, 767, « Hospita pauperibus et mystica Martha fuisti. »

(4) III, 823.

(5) I, 425-450. *Opusculum tripartitum*, the first part deals with the Commandments; III, 589-602, *On the Different Temptations of the Devil;* II, 486-504, *On the Difference between Mortal and Venial sin.*

strengthen them for the higher reaches of contemplation. During the years that followed his acquisition of the Master's Degree in Theology, and especially following a visit to his home in the year 1397, Gerson, feeling the need of his sisters more acutely, composed for their direction a guide on the practice of meditation, followed quickly by the long Treatise, *De mendicitate Spirituale*, which is a longer and quite practical development of the letter on meditation. In it he seeks to ground his sisters in humility, and to school them in the exercices of Meditation. Thus he urges his sisters to consider their wants, realize their weaknesses, and, in the guise of beggars, to storm the heavenly court with petitions for aid. The tract was composed during a period of illness (1).

After this Tract, if we may follow an indication which has every appearance of being chronological, Gerson sent to his home a letter on the Way to Meditate, a Treatise on the Contemplative Life, entitled *The Mountain of Contemplation*, and in the year 1400 a *Sermon on Virginity* (2). These three writings mark the peak in his instructions to his sisters. They complete a cycle of spiritual direction which we shall be at pains to analyse when we come to the discussion of the Mystical Teaching of Gerson. The fact of their having been written and sent proves two things, first, the devotion of the brother to the welfare of his sisters, and secondly, the devout union of interests in the little cottage that was the home of Gerson, and the all-embracing-place which religion had in that home. Such people faced the realities of life with bravery. They had standards clearly recognized, and painstakingly followed. As long as their parents were spared to them, these young women kept the union of devotion in their home and advanced hand in hand along the way of union with God.

A time was to come however when the pinch of want was to hurt them and force them to leave their home for the city of Rheims where in all probability they entered a

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(1) III, 811, « nous semble que le livret *De Mendicite espirituele*, lequel vous filtes jadis pour nous, vous estant au lit d'enfermete ».

(2) III, 602-605, *Letter on what one should-hink of each day* ; III, 541-575, *On the Mountain of Contemplation* ; III, 829-841, *Sermon on Virginity*.

cloister (1). From the time their father had left them the material prosperity of the girls had been dwindling. The outbreak of the conflict between the Duke of Burgundy and the Duke of Orleans, brought into the country of Rethel, frequent bands of marauders. Supporters of Burgundy came down from Brabant, plundering the country as they advanced ; then came the forces of Orleans in 1406 ; and with the coming and going of dissolute soldiery the virtue as well as the temporal goods of the Charliers became imperilled (2). Presently news came of the assassination of the Duke of Orleans, and the threat of retaliatory measures with an invasion of Burgundy. So it happened that sorrow and uncertainty entered into their lives, and in their perplexity they wrote to their brother for new guidance. « Why », they cried, « is it, that persons who strive to serve God have to undergo many and bitter temptations, more so than those of the world ? » (3). There were then but five of the sisters at home. For these, Gerson began a treatise in the form of a *Spiritual Dialogue*, to lend direction as to the manner of combatting temptations, and to settle doubts of conscience (4). It was of a highly practical nature, and suggested many aids to sustain the sisters in the trials they had to face. No doubt they kept for a time to their manner of life, so closely ressembling that of the Beguines, but the strain proved too great, and all finally decided to leave the dangers of the country for protection of city-walls, and to enter together into religion. Each of them took unusual devotion with her and became undoubtedly by her example and knowledge the means of improving the life and the standards of her community.

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(1) I, p. CLXXIX. In 1423, the Prior of the Celestines at Lyons mentions his sisters as « in coelibatu conviventes apud Rhemos Metropolim Galliae ».

(2) The *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, describes brigandage of 1417 thus : « Sic velut tempestas valida grassando hostiliter, et prope vesane spiritu agitati, ecclesias et monasteria effringentes,... vi rapiebant utensilia.... vasa domini viliter distrahebant, et extorquentes a captivis vi tormentorum pecunias, mulieres eciam sine discrecione etatis vel gradus violabant, et quidquid exequi consuevit tyrannis barbarica », vol. VI, p. 64.

(3) III, 805.

(4) III, 805-829.

With the boys of the Charlier family the same dedication to the cause of religion is apparent. All of them became priests, and between them, as we can see from the letters that have come down to us there was an affectionate sympathy, and a mutual understanding (1). With Gerson and his youngest brother this is most striking. When the young John arrived in Paris in the year 1394, his eldest brother was reaching prominence as a young Doctor of the University, and it must have been a pleasant experience for the young lad of fourteen to hear on all sides the praises showered upon John Charlier of Gerson. In the College of Navarre, where he made his philosophic studies, he lived in the reflected glory of his distinguished brother, and took pride in each step of his career from the winning of the Magistrate, and the beginning of the teaching ministry, to the reception of the greatest honor of all — the appointment to the office of Chancellor, which entailed the responsability of examining and of approving all candidates for the degrees of the University. Here was a new basis for the feeling of reverence in which the young John already held his brother ; herein, also, was found the means of bringing the two brothers into a closer union. For though he held such high position, Gerson still lived at the College of Navarre (2), and took a personal interest in the spiritual as well as the mental growth of his brothers.

Both the younger brothers felt the call to the religious life. All about them at Paris were houses of practically all the religious communities of the Church. The Dominicans and the Franciscans were powerful units in University life. The Canons Regular of Saint Victor were carrying on all the traditions of scholarship of William of Champeaux, and on the frequent visits that Gerson made to this Monastery outside the city walls where he had many friends, his brothers must have accompagnied him and so have visited the place. Then, too, there were the Carthusians outside the Gate of St. James, —

(1) Cfr e. g. III, 742, 744, 746, 767. Letters to brothers in which such expressions as « *frater Charissime* », « *frater dilectissimi cordis mei* », occur.

(2) IV, 576. Gerson tells that he had to live with Grammarians, since he had not sufficient income.

the Cistercians with their reputation for austerity, — the Carmelites, whose convent the Charliers passed time and again as they went up the hill from the Island of Paris to St. Geneviève, and the Benedictines near whose monastery of St-Germain-des-Prés they used to take their walks. But to none of these did Gerson's brothers feel attracted. On the right bank of the river Seine, within the city walls, near the Gate and Fortress of the Bastille, was the Convent of the Celestines, whose reputation for virtue, was enhanced by their foundation by one of the most recent Saints of the Calendar, Pietro di Murrone, known to his children as San Celestino. The order had been invited to France by Philip the Fair, for what were possibly sentimental reasons, — to express his disproval of Boniface VIII for having permitted the resignation and taken the place on the Papal Throne of Celestine the Fifth. — The Celestines were favored by Philip and later monarchs of France. Charles V granted them a tract of land near the Palace of Saint Paul (Pol) upon which their convent was built (1). The order prospered, the reputation of its members living still on the zeal of their founder. Their austerity was an especial attraction for serious youth who might have been shocked by the conflict of ideals and actions in some of the older orders. To the Convent of the Celestines, Nicolas was drawn, and the desire became soon so strong, that only the departure of his brother the Chancellor for the north in 1397 (2) kept him from going immediately his decision taken, to ask admittance into the order. The thought of what would be the plight of his younger brother, were he thus left completely alone, dissuaded him. Yet though he procrastinated, he put his time to good use, for in the nights when he and the young John were together they discussed their hopes, and Nicholas soon won John to build his thoughts for the future around the Order of the Celestines. Withal, before Gerson returned from Bruges,

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(1) L. Beurrier, *Histoire du monastère et des couvents des Célestins à Paris*, ch I ff., cfr. p. 59 : « In 1367, Charles V gave ten thousand gold francs to erect the church of the Celestines, and he enriched it with many gifts. »

(2) Gerson, received in 1394 from the Duke of Burgundy the post of Dean in the church of St. Donatien at Bruges.

Nicholas took leave of Paris, and entered the monastery of the Holy Trinity at Villeneuve (1), near Soissons, leaving John to continue his theological studies at the University.

When Gerson returned to Paris in 1401, there began for the two brothers — the oldest and the youngest of the family — an association that worked well in the lives of them both. The young John was the Benjamin of the Charliers. He had been born after Gerson left for Paris ; but despite the disparity of ages there grew up, between him and his eldest brother, an affection and a bond of sympathy and understanding that was to last through life. This development took place during the few years that the two were at Paris together. It was a time when the thoughts of the older brother were very much occupied with the reform of the Church in its Clergy and Members. At the same moment he was developing his Mystic Theology. It was a time too when the Chancellor was occupied with projects for the education of the young, and safeguarding them from the many evil influences that actually beset them in Paris. There is no doubt but the Tract : *On the Leading of Little Ones to Christ*, dates from this period (2). That the older brother controlled the education of the younger is likely ; and that the younger was quick to respond to the ideals of his guide is borne out by the tie of affection that otherwise could not have existed between them. It was a happy phase in the lives of them both, for the one because he was helped in the way of knowledge and grace, for the other because he could witness the ready response to his teachings, and see foreshadowed an improvement that he hoped to bring into the lives of all, King and cleric as well as scholar and child, if they would be influenced by his teaching. Thus between the brothers, teacher and pupil there grew up a love

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(1) J.-B. L'Ecuy, tells us *Essai sur la vie de Jean Gerson*, vol. I, 211-213, Paris, 1832, that Nicholas became sub-prior of the monastery in 1419. Gerson sent to Nicholas from Bruges his *Tract on the manner of Distingiushing true from false visions* (I, 43-59), and a tract which he had composed on the manner of life amongst the Carthusians (II, 715-730).

(2) Schwab, o. c., p. 694, note 1, dates this tract (1405). Probability is that it followed more closely on the Tract against the Romance of the Rose (1402), and formed a part of his campaign for the reform of Morals.

that was to make them rely to a considerable extent upon one another through life.

A proof of this dependence is found in the correspondance which passed from Gerson to the young John, after the latter had left him to join the Celestines. The attraction had always been great upon him for the religious life, and with the sense of the realities of life strong by ingrained in him under the lessons of the Chancellor, young John determined to enter the monastery. Even before he had attained the Doctorate he left the city and set out for home preparatory to entering the Celestines at Villeneuve where Nicholas was (1). Gerson accompanied his youngest brother a part of the way, full of joy at the vocation that made the offering of the Charliers complete, but conscious also of the sadness that was growing upon him. Some time later he wrote to Villeneuve to tell John : « When you had gone from me I felt a tenderness for you beyond anything I have ever felt before » (2). Loneliness crept into his life now, and the renewal of the University tasks grated him not a little. However he kept on in the same strain, trying by his teaching to instill better ideals into the hearts of the young who were one day to form the « Elite » of the Church. His teaching was on the Spiritual Life, and the works we have : *On the Spiritual Life of the Soul*, and *On Mystical Theology*, date from this period (3).

But the family tie was not to be broken though the brothers were apart. Shortly after John entered the Celestines, Gerson paid a visit to the monastery, to assure himself of the welfare of his brothers (4). The future of John was held to be very bright, — and Gerson returned to Paris, in the determination

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(1) « ille, qui a puero misertus est tibi,... superaddidit misericordiam, ut te repelleret a saeculo nequam, in quo jam demergendus pene fueras irrevocabiliter, si licentiam aut magisterium in artibus adeptus fuisses ». Letter from Gerson to John, III, 745.

(2) *Ibid.*, 744.

(3) III, 1-72, *De vita spirituale animae ;* III, 361-398, *De mystica theologia speculativa.*

(4) Letter to Nicholas, III, 741-743, « dum placuit humili charitati Reverendissimi Patris et Praeceptoris mei praecipui (i. e. d'Ailly) ... ducere me visitandum te, et domum vestram, tandem inter multa conveneram cum Domino Priore vestro et tecum, et muuto super statu germani nostri Novitii scriberemus ».

to do all he could by letter and tract to foster the zeal that was becoming manifest in the young novice. With this aim to wrote for John in the form of Letters many directions to be followed, so many, in fact, that Nicholas, became a little irritated, and perturbed for the health of the novice who was being led to harsh abnegation and exceptional resolution. He wrote to the Chancellor in protest, and had young John request that he be not further disturbed by the too-exacting zeal of Gerson. « The letters », he said, « roused scruples and caused sleepless nights » (1). But Gerson was not to be thus demoted from his position as adviser, and wrote to the effect that not his advice but an exaggerated response, in the way of long-vigils, was the cause of John's trouble. He averred also that he had no intention of abandoning his duty to give direction needed, and that if John did not ask for it, then he would send it to Nicholas. It seems quite patent that Nicholas was a little affected by the confidence that John had in his oldest brother, and it piqued him no doubt not to be consulted by the youth whose vocation he attributed to himself. Thus he was not slow to place the blame for a crisis occasioned by too great zeal on the Chancellor. It was a helpless sort of jealousy that sometimes crops up in the lives of very good people. In this instance it was not to endure long. For the young John was soon to break the temporary silence, and renew the correspondence with Gerson, by asking him for direction on Prayer. This was the circumstance for the writing of Gerson's Two *Tracts on Prayer* (2).

This union of ideal which has been traced thus far in the lives of the Charliers is a necessary introduction to the life-work of John Charlier of Gerson. Students of history who have followed him to into the Court-life and the politics of the time, who have witnessed his vigor in action, and his persistence in argument only too easily overlook the characteristic of his life that is the most true. The devotion that marked his relation with sisters and brothers is but the premise of his

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(1) III, 743.

(2) III, 247-262, *Tract on Prayer and its Value ;* III, 263-269, *Another Tract on Prayer.*

future activity. Because he was true to the lessons of love that had been taught him by father and mother at his own fireside he was to spend his days striving to help his brothers in the Church to mend their ways and to practice the religion that they professed. He carried to his task the zeal that he had in the directing of brothers and sisters. To Gerson, the Church was a family, and the happiness of all its members was to be insured by the same spirit of sacrifice, interdependence and prayer that had been lived in the family of the Charliers. All of his life was to be given to the work of reform. He was to give himself unstintingly. He was to gain great renown for sincerity and go down to the generations following him as a great Saint and scholar. But the spark that kindled the movement of reform with him was caught up in his own home, and from the habits of life in the family at Gerson were gained both the inspiration that was to prepare his great work and the love for his fellow-man that was to sustain him in it.

CHAPTER III

EDUCATION OF GERSON

In the latter half of the Fourteenth Century the University of Paris attained the peak of its prestige (1). Students were there in greater numbers than even the Thirteenth Century could boast of, new congregations came to settle in the shadow of the St. Geneviève, and many colleges were founded. Along the whole reach of the mountain, from the college of the English Nation near the rue de Fouarre, to the college of Navarre on the hillside, and from the Bernardines to the Dominican house in the rue St. Jacques, there was to be noticed, in the morning especially, before and after the class-hours of 7 to 11, a busy activity, as pedagogy, and college and convent disgorged their members who trooped off with their masters to some of the academic exercises, to the Mass for the Faculty, or to the lectures which made the life of the University (2). The blending of the whites and grays and browns of the religious habits with the many-colored robes prescribed for the students by the constitutions of the different colleges represented very well the spirit of the place and the manner of the learning afforded. For though one Philosophy, or the teaching of one master might for a time dominate the thought of the University, there were always those who stood apart, and there were always centers at which one could find opponents to the accepted teaching of the day (3). This was especially true of the convents, each being more or less given to the teachings

(1) Ch. Thurot, *De l'organisation de l'enseignement dans l'Université de Paris au Moyen Age*, p. 126 ; Schwab, o. c., p. 57, « Die Universität Paris stand damals auf dem Höhenpunkte ihres Einflusses und Ruhmes. »

(2) Bulaeus, *Historia Universitatis Parisiensis*, vol. IV, pp. 391-412.

(3) M. De Wulf, *Histoire de la philosophie médiévale*, vol. II, 5th ed., p. 177. With reference to the reaction against Occamism, De Wulf says : « La réaction réaliste vint plutôt des théologiens... Ce sont principalement les théologiens des ordres mendiants qui surent se soustraire à l'influence des Occamistes. »

of some great master, as a St. Thomas, or a St. Bonaventure. And while at times difficulties arose, obliging the University to suppress the courses and the preaching of members of a whole religious community, the accord was none the less general, and in all of the great convents on the left bank of the Seine within the confines of the city-walls, there were to be found one or more professors holding Chairs of Theology, recognized, and in many instances supported by the University (1).

There were four Faculties, — those of Theology, Art, Law and Medicine, — at the University of Paris. The Faculty of Arts was divided according to the nationality or origin of its members, the Nations being: the French, English, Norman and Picard (2). Due to the bitterness caused by the Hundred Years War, as also to the absence of English students from the life of the University during the long period of struggle between England and France, their vote in the Faculty of Arts was given to students from Germany and the Low-Countries (3). Each of the Nations exercised an important role in the administrative activities, in the giving of classes and in the granting of degrees. It was a matter of pride to each Nation that their men succeed as well as possible, and student and professor alike were quick to respond to the need and welfare of the group to which they belonged. At the head of each Nation was a Procurator, and each in turn had a Quaestor to manage its funds (4). All four Nations had a voice in the administration of the policies of the University, so that there were always seven votes to be cast in the general sessions of the University, one for each Faculty, and one for each Nation comprising the Faculty of Arts (5).

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(1) Thurot, *o. c.*, p. 114, enumerated the convents at the University. He added : « Chacun de ses couvents avait une chaire de théologie ». De Wulf, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 175, the religious orders were « admis à enseigner dans la faculté de théologie (et) représentent le plus souvent une force de résistance aux innovations. »

(2) Thurot, *o. c.*, pp. 13-17.

(3) These, with the Italians, really formed the English Nation, and had always a voice in the voting within the Nation.

(4) Thurot, *o, c.*, pp. 61-71, tells us that each Nation taxed its members for the maintenance of lecture-halls.

(5) This system of the vote by Nation prevailed in all the Universities,

Living in the colleges attached to the University, were small groups of students, maintained, most of them, by the bounty of the founder and the proceeds of the burses established for their support (1). If we include the religious congregations we can say that the majority of the students at the University were clerics, although there are ample indications that the Faculty of Law claimed a good attendance (2). Medicine received scant patronage; but the impetus being given to the study of the Natural Sciences was soon to accentuate interest in this subject and bring added strength to the Faculty. The colleges in their Charters of Foundation had stipulated that the young men to be admitted must have as their aim the attainment of a degree in a special science, and in many instances a definite time allowance was laid down. Thus, the Constitution of the college of Navarre, — a college inaugurated through the liberality of Joanna of Navarre, wife of Philip the Fair, in the year 1304, — limited the burses to students of Theology, and put a sanction on the academic standard of the college by dismissing from the Institution all students who, after a specified number of attempts, failed to attain the grades (3). There were admitted to the college of Navarre, 20 students of Rhetoric, 30 of Logic, and 20 Theologians, each student receiving four, six, or eight sous a week, until such time as he was able to profit by the fruits of an ecclesiastical benefice (4). The Popes favored the system, and even outside of France positions were held for the members

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and was to enter the procedure in the Councils of Pisa and of Constance due to the influence of the Universities over their proceedings.

(1) Thurot, *o. c.*, p. 39. Students without burses had to work, copying manuscripts, or performing more menial tasks.Many had to beg their food.

Ibid., p. 126. « From 1200 till 1500 there were fifty colleges founded at Paris. All of the needy were thus not cared for.

(2) III, 1108. Gerson speaks of the number, « qui se operam dent ut sciant Leges Justiniani », and remarks that they are more numerous than those who study to lead a good life.

(3) Bulaeus, *o. c.*, IV, p. 93, Students of the college of Navarre had to begin their study of the Book of Sentences within seven years, « et si quis in hoc defecerit, domus beneficie sit privatus ». Feret, *o. c.*, vol. III, pp. 16, 602 (Statutes of the college of St-Michel.

(4) Each year, a list, containing names of students worthy of benefices, was sent to the Pope ; Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 70 ; Salembier, *o. c.*, p. 67.

of the University (1). All of these ecclesiastical colleges, and they were many, were modeled on the type of the college of the Sorbonne, founded by Robert of Sorbon in the year 1257, to combat the attraction of the free schools of the Dominicans and the Franciscans, with whom the University was, at the time, engaged in a conflict on the matter of the rights of secular clergy over the Friars.

The purpose of all the foundations was to offer a means of support to the many poor students, and to guarantee by the seclusion entailed in the community life of the college some protection against the lax morals of the city (2). In such a college as the Navarre, master and students lived under a rule, dictating to them the way to spend their day. Guidance in the spiritual life was proffered to the students in the form of spiritual conferences (3). Then too, since all were preparing for the ministry, they were all to school themselves in the activities of the ministry, and preach the word to the congregations in the churches, and to their colleagues in the school. Each student who benefitted by a burse was required to remember his benefactor in his prayers, and to recite a certain portion of the canonical hours every day (4). On great occasions, such as the patronal feast of the Faculty, the students assembled in a body and marched to the church given for their devotions. Thus, for the students of Arts, it was the church of St. Julian le Pauvre down by the river bank. For the Theologians it was the church of the Mathurins in the rue St. Jacques. Students of Law assembled in the church of St. John of Jerusalem, and the students of Medicine in the home of the Dean of the Faculty (5). Such, in a general way

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(1) Denifle-Chatelain, *o. c.*, vol. III, p. 311, n° 1471, Clement VII granted to all masters and students of Paris... « fructus, redditus... beneficiorum quamvis in ecclesiis non resideant » (Oct, 11, 1382).

(2) Feret, *o. c.*, vol. III, 593-602, prints from original documents the statutes of several colleges at the University.

(3) Gerson himself delivered many such conferences both at the college of Navarre and in other houses at the University.

(4) Feret, *o. c.*, vol. III, p. 11. Students at Navarre were to celebrate in their chapel an anniversary mass for the Queen, her parents, and her friends. Cfr Schwab, *o. c.*, pp. 67-68, instances the obligations of other colleges.

(5) Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 61.

were the activities of the students in the colleges at the University.

For the class work, the colleges played a great part in the training of the lads who came to study Rhetoric and Grammar, and Logic as well. A system was followed whereby those who attained the grade of Master of Arts in a college devoted some of their time to the education of beginners, the while following courses of Theology as given by the professors of their choice in the Halls of the Nations along rue de Fouarre (1). Thus, a student who had completed his four years in the study of Logic, was, if he showed talent, invited to aid in the instruction of his younger confreres. And as he went, step by step, along the tedious course for the Theological degree, new avenues of occupation opened up before him. To attain the degree of Doctor of Theology was a work of twelve or more years (2). From the secular clergy, six years preparation were required for the admission to the Candidature for the Bachelor's degree. Then followed two years as a biblical student (3), two more as *Sententiarius* (4), after which one received the grade of Bachelor (5). The Licentiate and the permission to « teach anywhere in the world » was granted to applicants, after an examination by the Chancellor of the University, in the presence of six assistants, chosen by himself (6). These examinations occurred at intervals of two years, according to faculty rules, and the year of examination was

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(1) Thus Peter d'Ailly taught Gerson Philosophy, the while he himself was studying Theology.

(2) Feret, *o. c.*, vol. III, pp. 71-82; Thurot, *o. c.*, p. 43, says : « la théologie prenait 14 années à apprendre, à discuter et à enseigner. »

(3) Two years were spent in the study of certain books of the Bible.

(4) So called because the *Book of Sentences*, — famous text in the Middle Ages, — was studied. Students were required to suspend all other activity such as preaching, giving conferences, or participating in the public disputes, the while they studied the Sentences. Cfr Feret, *o. c.*, vol. III, p. 74.

(5) *Ibid.*, p. 75.

(6) Custom permitted the Chancellor to charge ten to twelve francs for the examination. D'Ailly was opposed to this, but Clement VII permitted the custom to continue (*Opera Gersonii*, I, 175 ff.). Gerson also was against the system, but it seems (cfr I, 123) that none of the Masters would sit on the examination board with the Chancellor unless he was paid a small fee. Cfr Feret, *o. c.*, vol. III, 78 ; Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 77.

styled the « Year of Jubilee », no doubt because of the feasting that accompanied the attainment of the high grade by members of the different Nations. The examinations had become formalities and once admitted to the test, the applicant was quite certain of his degree, for, if he had the recommendation of six professors, the Chancellor could not refuse to grant the Licentiate (1). In the following scholastic year the new Licentiate proved his ability by a series of disputes that occurred at intervals from early autumn until Advent, at which last defense he maintained his position against all comers, and on any subject *(de quodlibet)* (2). This long training finished, the Birretum, or Doctor's Cap, was granted with the words : « *Incipiatis in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti* ». Following this, tradition demanded that the new Doctor give a dinner to the members of his Nation, to his Faculty, as well as to the Bachelors and the Licentiates, and those of his friends who might not be numbered amongst these. The expense of maintaining this custom ran very high, and limitations were frequently put upon the amount that a student should pay for his Doctorate (3).

Nor was the career of the student at the University a dull one. All about him was a busy life of study and discussion. Disputes, or, better, academic exercises were of frequent occurrence, in the winter semester especially (4), and besides the ordinary lectures, the way was open for him to profit by the ideas of the men of renown who lectured in the various colleges and convents of the city, and by the conferences which were given under the patronage of his Nation (5). Amusements were common as well, when the student joined lustily in the Kermesses of the city-folk. In the development of the Drama,

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(1) In 1401, Gerson was to suggest that he be empowered to refuse degrees as a means of improving scholarship, I, 120 *(Letter on the Reform of Theology)*.

(2) Feret, *o. c.*, vol. III, 75-76. This defense lost importance, in time, and its place was taken by the defense in the Sorbonne.

(3) Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 77.

(4) Thurot, *o. c.*, pp. 86-88. In Gerson's time, these disputes were held by the Masters, but early in the Fifteenth Century interest lapsed, and the students themselves presented the « disputa ».

(5) *Ibid.*, pp. 61-71.

and in the representation of the Mystery-Plays up till this time student activity played no small part (1). Contemporaneously with the growth of the Guild for the Passion Play at Paris was the organization of societies in the colleges, to present at intervals of the Liturgical Year a dramatization of the event in the Life of Christ or the Blessed Mother that was commemorated. At a later period this good custom deteriorated to such an extent that the quality of the productions became a source of scandal, and caused the condemnation of the art.

The city of Paris was still on the crest of the wave of prosperity that started up under the beneficent reign of Charles V (2). From all sides, but especially from the north, merchants came with their stocks, and, finding conditions much to their liking, many of them set up a center of commerce in the busy marts on the right bank of the Seine, in the Place de Grève, — where stands the Hôtel-de-Ville to-day, — and in the crowded streets near the Cemetery of the Innocents. All this, for the students, many of them fresh from the farm-country, was a source of wonderment. Indeed the attractions of the life outside the colleges became so strong that, for the good of the colleges, the administrator and his associates felt constrained to forbid their students to absent themselves from the college, and to tax those who returned from their wanderings at a late hour of the night (3).

In spite of the rules of their colleges, however, the pleasures of the students were by no means tame. It is estimated that in Paris in the beginning of the Fifteenth Century were no less than four thousand taverns. To these, no doubt, many of students were drawn and in the course of drinking bouts came into contact and often into conflict with the town people (4). Broils and rioting were of frequent occurrence, and though

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(1) M. Sepet, *La drame religieux au Moyen Age*, pp. 21-22, 33, Paris, 1903 ; Id., *Origines catholiques du théâtre moderne*, Paris, 1901.

(2) Funck-Brentano, *o. c.*, p. 455. The country districts were, however, harassed by brigands.

(3) Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 68, cites the statutes of the college of Harcourt : « kein Zögling darf ausserhalb des Hauses schlafen oder spät nach Hause kommen, ohne gewichtigen Grund.... bei Strafe von 2 Sous ».

(4) Coville, *o. c.*, p. 90 ff.

the local police could not punish the students without the consent of the University many were the times when they presumed permission, and so provoked anew an endless quarrel that went on throughout the lifetime of the University between the Rector and the city-officials. Some colleges were lax in supervising the conduct of their student-body, but the chief reason for the lack of control over them was to be found in the clemency which the University used in condemning wrongdoing; and clerics as well as lay subjects of the University turned the period of their stay at Paris to the gain of worldly as much as of book-learning (1).

Such, briefly was the life of the University of Paris, when in the Fall of the year 1377, a travel-stained lad of fourteen years entered the city, on the west side, by the gate of Saint-Denys, and crossed midst the bustle of the tradesmen, through the market-district, until he reached the river and made his way across towards the high towers of Notre Dame. Thus Gerson, could have done, as he came in upon the long route that led from Rheims to Paris, his few belongings and some treasured manuscripts carried in a sack over his shoulder, — full of concern for the future opening out before him, full of the realization of the sacrifices made to let him leave home, and so of the responsibility that was his. To Notre Dame he would go, and before climbing the hill to the college of Navarre where he was awaited, make a brief offering of his lifework to Our Lady, then with sturdy heart and happy confidence, set out across the Petit-Pont and enter the precincts of the University seeing already about him the beginnings of the feverish activity that was to mark the year's work. The records of the Universitv show us that he was registered as a student of Arts, in the Gallican Nation (2).

Gerson entered the college of Navarre, and became the beneficiary of a burse for a student of Logic. Under the direction of a renowned scholar, Henry of Oyta († 1397), whom he

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(1) Thurot, *o. c.*, p. 40, « les fêtes célébrées par les Nations en l'honneur de leur patron, au lieu d'être une occasion d'édification, n'étaient qu'une provocation à l'ivrognerie ». Coville, *o. c.*, p. 123, says that the life of the students was not watched closely enough.

(2) Denifle-Chatelain, *o. c.*, vol. III, p. 452.

mentioned in later life (1), he began the study of his Philosophy, taking most of his classes in the college of Navarre. But it was not d'Oyta who had the most influence on him. At the University it had been customary for a student to attach himself to one professor above all others and to depend upon his advices and direction (2). In such a way began friendships that were often to endure through life, and of these few were as firm and as fervent as the one which existed between Gerson and Peter d'Ailly (3). D'Ailly was a man for whom Gerson formed quickly an attachment that was to grow with years. He had already achieved considerable fame as a preacher and a student. It may be that the ground of their affection started with the sympathy that d'Ailly would no doubt display for one coming from so near to his own home or for one raised, like himself, in the country. More likely Gerson won the affection of his master by his deep spirituality, and solid convictions. For, already as a student, d'Ailly was manifesting a keenness for ecclesiastical reform that was to characterize his later life and he must have seen in Gerson a willing aid who was to prove of great assistance later on. At all events, the contact that began between the two as master and student ripened into a strong friendship in the course of years.

Gerson's training lasted from 1377 until 1394; during this time, he gained the degrees of Master in Arts, and Doctor of

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(1) Schwab, o. c., p. 84.

(2) Many Masters paid for the support of their students, and, instead of charging for their lessons, gave food and clothing to the students.

(3) Peter d'Ailly (1350-1420), born at Compiègne, educated at the college of Navarre of which he became Rector after the reception of his Doctorate in 1380. He headed a mission from the University to Avignon for the condemnation of John of Montesono in 1386. Chancellor of the University in 1389, he became also confessor to the King. In 1395 he was made Bishop, two years later he was assigned to Cambrai, when he tried to negotiate the peace of the Church in the name of the Emperor Wenceslaus, and of the French King. He was a firm defender of Benedict XIII until 1408. At Pisa, 1409, he was most active. Named Cardinal in 1411, he insisted that a Council for the peace and the reform of the Church be held. He, with Zabarella and Gerson, may be called the « soul of the Council ». The date of his death is uncertain; Salembier, o. c., p. 391, note 1, holds for 1420.

Theology. In their edition of the *Chartularium of the University*, Denifle-Chatelain quote, from the Catalogue of the Licentiates (1), the list of Gerson's achievements as recorded : « *nota quod Mag. Johannes de Yarson fecit primum cursum* (i. e. *Bibliae*) *1388, secundum 1389, legit Sententias 1390, et fuit expeditus* (i. e. received his Baccalaureate in Theology) *1392* » (2). In all probability he was promoted to the Licentiate two years later, and on that occasion received the benefice of Dean in the church of St. Donatian at Bruges, through the courtesy of the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Bold (3). The Duke was highly cultured himself, and loved to have at his service men of parts. Gerson should thus have attained the Doctorate in the year 1394-1395.

Following the instructions of d'Oyta and d'Ailly, he was introduced to the intricacies of Philosophy. The system followed at the University generally was that of William of Occam, whose reaction against the Thomism and Scotism, that had already dominated a century of Christian thought, was welcomed by the men of the late Fourteenth Century as more suited to direct their leanings towards the Natural Sciences (4). Occamism, like the Philosophies of our own day, was most concerned with the processes and the value of knowledge (5). For the Occamist, doubt was cast on the value of some knowledge. The sorties of the reason into the reaches of Metaphysics were discountenanced, and the generalities arrived at were rejected. Nothing but the individual existed. And even from that all knowledge was not had directly. Intuitions might tell of the existence, and of the internal qualities of an object; but for the further appreciation of the thing to be known, the mind had to resort to processes of abstraction. In this, there was no immediate contact of mind with the real object, but with a thought-object of its own making, and which might or might

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(1) Ms. lat. 2657(a), (Bibl. Nat.)

(2) *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, vol. III, p. 454, note 9.

(5) *Gallia Christiana*, vol. V, col. 258, Paris, 1781. Joannes II Gerson, a natali locu in campania sic dictus... et Burgundiae elymosynis, in decanum Burgensem admittitur 16 Aprilis 1394.

(4) E. Gilson, *La philosophie au Moyen Age* (Collection Payot, nos 25-26), p. 281 ff., Paris, 1925.

(5) De Wulf, *o. c.*, vol. II, pp. 165-173 ; Gilson, *o. c.*, p. 250 ff.

not be a true representation of the thing in question (1). Thus was the door left open for skepticism, and since the adherents of the Philosophy did not hesitate to apply it to all the body of the accepted teaching of the day, Faith included, it was not long before the exaggerated subjectivism that was to result showed its head, and had an effect of frightening, for a while, the Faith of Christians; for it made belief in the supernatural seem unreasonable, and certainly claimed it to be beyond the scope of reason (2).

This was the Philosophy that Gerson learned, and although he was keen enough to see a weakness in the system, it had none the less an influence on his thought. During the long years from 1377, when he entered the college of Navarre, until 1395, when he attained the Doctorate in Theology, he was constantly under the influence of men formed in Occamism, and the turn he then received gave direction of the manner of his thought through life. Like the followers of Occam, he distinguished Reason from Faith, and Philosophy from Theology. But he did not, like most, divorce the one from the other and take from religion all support in Reason. For the confirmed Occamist, the dogmas of Christianity were without the realm of Reason, and subject only to the adherence of Faith. Even the natural arguments for the existence of God and of His Attributes, — for the existence of the soul as well, — were considered unconvincing, and to be the object of Faith alone (3). Given such uncertainty, the function of the will of man was exaggerated, and refuge from doubt was sought in a sort of Categorical Imperative, directing one to accept blindly the heritage of his Faith, and its moral guidance. Things were considered to be right or wrong, not because of any inherent goodness or evil in the action but because the Divine Lawgiver willed

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(1) De Wulf, o. c., vol. II, pp. 167-168 : « On objectait à G. d'Occam : la science est donc illusoire, elle s'occupe de l'universel, qui est un néant ? — Oui, répond-il, en ce sens que l'objet... n'est pas la réalité universelle, mais le terme universel... Tout agnosticisme est en germe dans pareille épistomologie. »

(2) *Ibid.*, pp. 171-172 : « Il conteste la validité de ses preuves de l'existence de Dieu..., » « non potest sciri evidenter quod Deus est ». Cfr Gilson, o. c., p. 263.

(3) De Wulf, o. c., p. 172.

it so. « God might, » said the Occamists, « have willed that the act of stealing be good instead of bad. But He did not do so. Were God to will that we hate Him, then that action had upon it the sanction of goodness (1). » Controversive teachings such as these flung open the door not alone to skepticism, but to a service of fear. The Divine Omnipotence was stressed to the loss of the Divine Wisdom. Human initiative faded in the presence of an inscrutable destiny, and a sense of helplessness made for indifference to morality. All this can be explained in the light of the evils of the day, evils of a moral nature amongst clergy and laity, evils resultant on the Schism, that, as the years rolled on and effort to reform the situation failed, made even scholars of the University regard the whole drama through which they were living as the judgment of God upon an unfaithful people (2). Thus, simultaneously with their insistence on the dignity of reason and the abilities of man to question the object of his knowledge, they were teaching a blind adherence to the truths of relevation, and along with their fear of the Divine Might, they were practicing or tending to practice indifference towards obligations and a superiority that made them a law to themselves.

These, briefly, were fruits, borne from the ideas which the professors of Theology were wont to teach in the days of Gerson's apprenticeship. He heard them from the lips of d'Ailly who was his major professor in Theology for seven years; they were re-echoed in the other classes he attended, such as those Laurentius de Chavanges, of the Master Gilles Des Champs (3), or of Henry of Langenstein (4), professor at

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(1) *Ibid.*, p. 172; Gilson, *o. c.*, p. 266 : « La haine de Dieu, le vol et l'adultère sont mauvais en raison du précepte divin qui les interdit. » Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 283 ff.

(2) Gilson, *o. c.*, p. 266 : « (Dieu) peut donc perdre les innocents et sauver les coupables ; il n'y a rien dans tout cela qui ne dépend de sa simple volonté. » In the preaching of the time there was a great amount of fatalism. St. Vincent Ferrier, d'Ailly and Clamanges interpreted each calamity as the punishment of God on His people.

(3) Feret, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 223.

(4) Langenstein († 1397) was spoken of by Gerson as « a master of illustrious memory », II, 126. Gerson was much influenced by him, and seems to have modeled many of his writings on the style of Langenstein. Cfr Feret, *o. c.*, vol. III, p. 267.

the Sorbonne. In the *disputa*, held weekly in the Halls and convents of the University, these same notions were prevalent and those who look the trouble to sift out true from false and strive to exercise a check upon the teachings that were offered them seem, from a letter written later in life by Gerson to the Theologians in the college of Navarre, to have been the exceptions (1).

Gerson himself was, however, such a one. In the letter to the students of Navarre just mentioned, we get a glimpse at the manner of his studying (2). He seems to have looked ever to the practical side of things and to have chosen his learning with a view to the use he could make of it. It may be that his outlook was suggested by the knowledge that he would be asked to translate the notions he received into simpler terms for the edification and instruction of those at home. Or it may be again, that his deep sense of the needs of the Church made him measure all his learning to respond to the want. At all events, and for whatever motive, he was zealous to build carefully, to take nothing for granted, but to set deeply the principles from which to start and, by referring all back to them, guarantee for himself a unity of knowledge and balance of thought (3). Another feature of his method which he urges upon the students of Navarre, was a fidelity to the old Masters and a suspicion against innovators (4). He condemned roundly those who would limit their advance to the findings of one Doctor, and advised that truth be sought out in all its sources, and that not impetuously and in a spirit of vanity, but humbly (5). There was in Paris as there always has been and will

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(1) Thurot, *o, c.*, pp. 87-88.

(2) I, 106-109. *Letter to the students of the college of Navarre* urging them to give their attention to the writings of Bonaventure, St. Thomas, and other « antiqui » instead of being taken with « modern » opinions.

(3) I, 107 : « Est itaque nostra capacitas non modo finita, sed exigua, et quae ad tot libros quot occurrunt evolvendos non sufficit. Quosdam in transitu raptim videamus... Aliis vero per vices utamur... At vero quosdam familiares nobis assiduos advocemus, et tanquam domesticos intra mentis nostrae cubicula... collocemus ». Cfr I, 178.

(4) I, 106-109, *Letter to students in the college of Navarre.*

(5) « signum curiosae singularitatis est indebita Doctorum et doctrinarum appropriatio... Si aliquis dixerit, exempli gratia, de Scoto vel de Ripa... doctor iste minus bene sensit in hac et in hac materia : vide-

be in an educational center, a doubting spirit ; noticeable also was a strong tendency to haggle rather than to discuss. Professors in their courses gave countenance to it, and a brilliant student was considered to be one who could not easily be cornered in an argument. It was the fulfillment of the promise made in the career of the « *Venerabilis Inceptor* » as Occam was known to the men of his age ,since despite his plea for simplicity, his ruses in argument seem to have been so shrewd as to make it nigh impossible to defeat him in discussion (1). The system was bearing fruit in the late Fourteenth Century, when Gerson saw fit to challenge the mentality of the students, and inform them that a « penitential spirit was worth more than knowledge » (2). It was a period of affectation in learning when the only effort at adaptation was to adjust one's expression to the minds of the cultured, and when speeches and sermons were colored by the familiarity of the orator with the events of Greek and Roman history and legend. Of this we find Gerson himself guilty, — purple patches occurring frequently in the addresses he made in early life and before the Court (3), — but we are made to feel that it was done with a bad grace and that time was not far off when he was to purge his speech of all display of learning and aim at the instruction of simple minds.

More than this, and chiefly indicatory of the independent attitude of Gerson to the « school spirit » of his days is his open criticism of the evil attendant on Occamism, and his attempt to harmonize Realism and Nominalism (4). For if Gerson was Nominalistic in his Philosophy he was certainly Realistic in his Theology. Once his studies were complete and he had attained a position of authority in the University, he

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bimus protinus secundum varietatem Ordinum, varietates affectionum et gustuum, his indignantibus... aliis congratulantibus et faventibus. » I, 98.

(1) De Wulf, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 174, « la gymnastique de l'esprit devint une sorte de sport que les disciples du *venerabilis inceptor* pratiquèrent avec plus de virtuosité que leur maître. »

(2) I, 106 ; III, 361.

(3) III, 1021-1030, *Sermon preached before the Faculty* in 1388, and III, 980-994, *Sermon preached before the King* in 1391, abound with references to the classics.

(4) This matter will find a fuller treatment in Chapter V.

had opportunity to see the effects of the training and, in some way, was anxious to change it (1).

For the University herself there developed in the soul of Gerson a deep affection, and tributes to her as « Mother », as « protectress of truth and goodness », as « source of wisdom, light of Faith », « the beauty and honor of France as of all the world » (2), are but a few of the titles he used to describe her in the writings and the sermons of his later life. We can understand how a poor lad who had received favor and opportunity from an Institution would, in gratitude, always cherish it. Gerson came to Paris with nothing but his carnestness, in the quest of learning and with a desire to enter upon an ecclesiastical career. From the beginning almost, his zeal was rewarded by the commendations of his professors, and his need supplied by a small benefice when he had proved his worth in the Disputes (3). In the year 1384, he became Procurator of the French Nation, and entered, as a young man of twenty into the circle of privileged ones at the University (4). In 1386, he took part in the general uprising of scholars over the denial of the Immaculate Conception by John of Montesono, and, through the patronage of d'Ailly, he was a member of the delegation that went to the Court of Pope Clement VII at Avignon when the teaching of the Immaculate Conception was defended and John of Montesono condemned (5). Three years later, when he had acquired prestige as an orator, he delivered an address to the students of Navarre (6) which has come down to us, and which shows already brewing in his mind the project of reform that was soon to find expres-

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(1) Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 299.

(2) II, 432 ; III, 1529 ; II, 201, 123.

(3) III, 989. Gerson remarks that Pope Clement « proprio instinctu et motu me beneficio donavit ». In 1401, he was to refer to this as insufficient to meet his wants, IV, 726. The benefice consisted of 40 pounds a year. Bulaeus, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 606.

(4) The honor is lessened when we reflect that the Procurator held office for a month only.

(5) I, 112, speaking of the justice of the condemnation of Montesono, Gerson says : « ego ipse Baccalareus cursor tunc existens cum coeteris praecellentissimis... viris ab Universitate legatis praesens interfui ».

(6) III, 1021.

sion. On several occasions he addressed the Court (1). Other positions of honor came to him, and his conduct in all of the commissions was honorable. In this spectacular advance, the helping-hand of the friendship of d'Ailly can be seen. For according as he himself advanced to places of responsibility he was lifting Gerson along with him, until such time as having to resign the Chancellorship to accept the appointment to the Bishopric of the diocese of Puy, he yielded his position into the hands of his trusted follower (2).

Many other friendships did Gerson form during the period of his studies and teaching at Paris. They were friendships of sympathy and understanding as a general rule, and were made with the intent to unite effort in the work of bettering conditions amongst people and clergy. With two men particularly, both of whom had been his students, and from whom we have high eulogiums of his character and zeal, was he intimate, — Nicholas of Clamanges († 1440 cir.) and Gerard Machet († 1448 cir.). The former is known as an eminent latinist and one of the best preachers of the day. In his correspondence and in his writings on reform may be seen a depth of sympathy with the views of Gerson, and ample indication that much of his inspiration was drawn from the practical lessons of Gerson in the Halls of the University. The latter, Machet, rose higher in the academic life, and shared the political as well as the educational notions of his former master. Another who must have come under the spell of Gerson's personality was William Evrard († 1444) who was an intimate of the two above-named. There were certainly others whose names have not come down to us (3), who carried from the University of Paris as they went their several ways, — some

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(1) III, 980-94, *Sermon* delivered in 1391 ; III, 1204-14, *Sermon* given in the name of the University on the question of Union in the Church.

(2) There was question of Gerson's succeeding to all d'Ailly's honors, at the time. He himself refused to accept a position at Court, IV, 725, « sola haec fuit occasio cancellariam postulandi ».

(3) With d'Ailly, Machet, Clamanges he was in frequent correspondence. Many others, especially men in monasteries, wrote to him for counsel. A letter which Gerson wrote to his brother John (published in J.-B. Gence, *Jean Gerson, restitué et expliqué par lui-même*, p. 34 ff., Paris, 1836), asks a remembrance to « friends too numerous to mention ».

to take positions in the newly formed Universities along the Rhine and at Vienna, others to go out into the active ministry, as Deans and Canons, — a vivid memory of the personality and teaching of the young Gerson, that went far to prepare the popularity and success of his reforms. The education of Gerson was fruitful because he had purpose in the pursuit of it, because he was unselfish in the dispensing of his learning, and because he had ideas and knew how to inspire those with whom he came into contact. A glimpse at some of the ideals that animated the man as he attained the high responsibility of Chancellor of the University of Paris, will help us the easier to appreciate the direction of his career and the movements he inaugurated for the good of Church and Country.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAN
HIS CHARACTER AND IDEALS

In the year 1395, when d'Ailly resigned the position of Chancellor of the University of Paris, there was need that a strong hand succeed him. Now, more than ever before, the evils of the Schism were being realized. Both King and Council had been made to feel it in the previous year when the Avignon Cardinals, against their expressed wish, entered Conclave and elected to the succession of Clement VII, Cardinal Peter de Luna, who took the name of Benedict XIII. The University also had the chagrin of seeing its advices disregarded (1). The situation had aggravated; the Separation was confirmed; and it began to appear certain that as the Dukes could only be trusted to draw what they could to their private gain from the confusion of Church government, so also, to the sorrow of the well-disposed, was it patent that the Cardinalate was not minded to suffer a loss of prestige, by the risks entailed in the compromise with Rome (2). More and more, the duty devolved upon the University of theatening and cajoling both the Court and the Curia into the dispositions that would make possible a lasting peace for the Church. To meet the need it was evident that there should be at the Head of the Faculty of Theology, a man of sincerity, conviction and honor, who was untrammeled by the suspicions of partisanship, whose words would be fearless and straightforward, and whose counsel unselfish.

Gerson was the choice for the place. He had lived at the

(1) The University had urged that the Cardinals postpone the election of a successor to Clement until a Congress of Prelates, Barons and distinguished members of the University had been held to discuss means of restoring union. The King and Council had assented to the proposition. Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VI, p. 1154 ff.; Salembier, *o. c.*, p. 146.

(2) Salembier, *o. c.*, p. 147.

College of Navarre through the trying times of the Schism. In the first year of his student life he had, with the whole Corporation of the University, celebrated the election at Rome of Pope Urban VI, joining with the Philosophers in the solemn procession to the Church of Notre Dame, and chanting the *Te Deum* in which Princes and Prelates joined with the scholars. Then came the period when low whispers began to insinuate themselves, as the Ambassador of the new Pope to the French Court, — Peter of Murles, — treacherously drew exaggerated pictures of the manner of the election of Urban and aroused doubts as to its validity (1). These suspicions were seconded, as time went on, by disgruntled and disappointed Cardinals, and by the King who was wise enough to see the disavantage to his Kingdom in the departure of the Papacy from Avignon (2). July came, and with it envoys to the King from members of the College of Cardinals who were meeting in Anagni, begging his favor on their project to separate from Urban. Charles publicly acted the role of uncertainty, the while sending to the assembled Cardinals indications of his accord with them. Thus reassured, the quasi-Conclave carried out the separation from Urban whom they condemned, and the University, shortly after the resumption of lectures in the Fall of 1378, received word of the election of a new Pope, Clement VII. Gerson lived during that year and the one to follow through an excitement and an uncertainty as Councils of Bishops, of Doctors, and of the Nations of the University met to answer the demand of the King to give some decision as to the validity of the elections, and to indicate a path to be followed in the choice of Obedience to one or other claimant (3). In the University there was not unanimity (4). But the bulk of the sympathy went to Clement VII, and d'Ailly, then a young Bachelor of Theology, went off in the month of May to present to the Court of Avignon the Obedience and the « supplicia » of the University (5).

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(1) Valois, *La France et le grand schisme d'Occident*, vol. I, p. 92.
(2) Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, pp. 144-149 ; Salembier, *o. c.*, p. 67.
(3) Valois, *o. c.*, pp. 130-140.
(4) The English and the Picard Nations held for neutrality. Valois, *o. c.*, p. 139.
(5) Salembier, *o. c.*, p. 69.

It is possible that for Gerson there was not for one moment a suspicion as to the justice of the cause of Clement. He could not however have been unaware that the temporal power of France was trying to profit by the secession, especially after the Duke of Anjou, governing, in the year 1381, in the name of the child Charles VI, forced, against the will of the Germans, the Normans and the Picards, a united decision of adherence to the cause of Avignon. The exodus of students and professors that took place then was a sad blow to the University. Several of the most famed masters left to take places in new Universities in Germany, and Henry of Langenstein, and Henry of Oyta were amongst them (1). The thought could not but arise in the minds of those devoted to the Institution that she was being made a tool to serve in the political aims of the Duke. Gerson must have felt this as keenly as any other ; for the love of the University had grown upon him in the four years that he had already spent there, and he, like the masters of the Schools, liked to think of her as free from the trammels of subserviency.

All during the years when he was preparing the Doctorate, the problem of union was agitating the minds of Theologians ; want of support from the Princes weakened the effect of their schemes (2), and there was a growing consciousness that they could not trust even the ecclesiastical Princes to further their plans. Disappointment at the lack of good-will, and at the calculating attitudes in those who should have supported them caused the flame of their ardor to flicker. But they held to their position as champions of the Faith, and awaited opportunity when by peace and Christian spirit a settlement would come. The rejection at Avignon of the plea of the University that the Cardinals retard the election of a successor to Clement VII in 1394, was a cruel shock to all. Chagrin settled upon them,

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(1) Henry of Langenstein left Paris in 1382 (O. Hartwig, *Henricus de Langenstein dictus de Hassia*, p. 57, Marburg, 1857) ; in the course of his journey into Germany he tarried along the Rhine, and while there he condemned, at Worms and Mainz, the *De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum* of Ruysbroeck for the great number of errors that it contained. Cfr A. Auger, *o. c.*, p. 250, quotes a letter of Gerard Groote to that effect.

(2) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VI, p. 1147.

and it became evident that some new blood and some better resolve had to be infused into the University-life if she was to hold her influence. That was the occasion of the election of Gerson to the place of Chancellor.

He had proved himself a leader in 1394, when before the Court and Princes he preached in the name of the University and urged the warring elements to settle their feuds and to work for the peace of the Church (1). Partly through his influence over the Duke of Burgundy, who was patron to Gerson, steps were taken shortly afterwards to reach agreement as to means to settle the Schism. The King, being at the time in his senses, was approached and found to be well-disposed; so the University was empowered to solicit the opinions of her members on the matter. A huge iron coffer was placed in the Church of the Mathurins and into it were cast votes to the number of almost ten thousand. Amongst these three ideas prevailed, the *via cessionis*, the *via compromissi*, and the *via concilii* (2). The ideas were not new, having been discussed as early as 1381 by Peter d'Ailly (3). At that time the project of calling a General Council was strongly defended by Henry of Langenstein, and his friend Conrad of Gelnhausen (4). It seemed to carry with it the best guarantee of success. Even in 1394, in the declaration of opinions, a great many rallied to that idea. For a moment it seemed that peace was at hand; manifestations of sympathy were coming to Paris from other Universities (5) : but personal interest again intervened. The King lent an ear to the protests of the Duke of Orleans against the University's pretense to power, and the adroit flattery of Peter de Luna, the representative of Avignon at the French Court, seconded the appeal to the King's dignity, and he for-

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(1) Gerson, *Opera*, III, 1204-1214. A sermon in the name of the University for the peace of the Church.

(2) Hefele-Leclercq, o. c., vol. VI, p. 1148, note 1; Pastor, o. c., vol. I, pp. 187-188.

(3) Salembier, o. c., p. 131.

(4) Salembier, o. c., p. 133; A. Dufourcq, *Histoire moderne de l'Eglise*, vol. VI, pp. 163-164; Hefele-Leclercq, o. c., vol. VI, p. 1118 ff; Cfr Gerson, *Opera*, II, pp. 261-267.

(5) Cologne sent an expression of approval, July 5th, 1394, Vienna also. Cfr Schwab, o. c., p. 133.

bade the University to meddle further in the matter (1). Then, in September, came the word of the death of Clement VII when the King and the University wrote to urge the Conclave to postpone election until steps had been taken to consult Rome. But their advices were left unheeded, and with the election of Benedict XIII the Schism was confirmed. Gerson's reputation was very high at the time. He was a favorite whose influence was ascending, and he had won respect by his address before the Court in the name of the University in 1394 (2).

To his office, he took with him qualifications of character and intellect that must have given bright promise to his administration, and a sense of the practical that would face opposition fearlessly. In accepting the place he had a mind to work only for the improvement of the University, and for the benefit of religion and public morals. There was nothing of ambition to spoil the effort he would make, and he had already won esteem for his piety, his zeal, his candor and his honest discretion.

He was never exuberant. In his devotions, as in his philosophy, he maintained a sane outlook, and already, in an address before the King on the Feast of the Epiphany in 1391, he had plead for a spirit of prayer and concord thoughout the Kingdom as the chief means to heal the wounds of the Church (3). We know from a declaration that he made some years later that it was with hesitancy that he entered into the maelstrom of activity that the Chancellorship entailed, fearing the shock that it would bring to his private devotion (4). He remarked that he was « scrupulous, timid, easily disturbed » and not at all fitted for a life of activity, much less for the life of a courtier. Duty seemed to demand the sacrifice of him, however, so he made it. He had not an enemy in the world when he started

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(1) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VI, p. 1150.

(2) III, 1204-1214.

(3) III, 992-993, « malum est spirituale, remedium quaerendum est praecipue per arma spiritualia, per orationes videlicet et jejunia. Et supponamus, malum hoc ecclesiae per viam humanam sanari non posse, tanto magis orationes fieri deberent. »

(4) IV, 725-726.

his career, but his unswerving adherence to what he felt to be the right was to make for him ere long a host of powerful opponents, whose strength he was to feel in later life. One thing he did not and would not suffer to decline, that was his spiritual life. It was the chief asset that he had, the thing he valued highest, and the feature of his personality that must be appreciated if any sympathetic understanding of the character of the man is to be had.

Besides, Gerson was filled with zeal for religion. At the University he had not been lax in his work, nor was he indifferent to the manner of good he could do. His classes were practical (1). His aim in them was to proffer not alone the doctrine, but a suggestion as to the ways of making it live (2). It may be that the origin of this attitude should be traced to the home influence and training where Gerson at an early age began to translate in his own life the beliefs that he held, and the new truths he learned. At all events, his teaching, from the start, took on that character, and the testimony of one of his pupils that Gerson was « fired with a zeal for souls » and was a « guide in the heavenly way » is ample enough proof that his effort was not vain (3). This same zeal carried him further, and in the exercise of his functions as Censor of the doctrines of his fellow-professors he was neither negligent nor careless. In fact, it was not long before men outside the University sphere appealed to his decision and involved him in controversies in distant lands. A striking example of this is his condemnation of a work of the Flemish Mystic, John Ruysbroeck († 1381), on a charge of Pantheism. He was untiring in his efforts to stamp out the superstitious devotions that a misguided clergy preached or, at any rate, tolerated in their churches. Another phase of the same superstition was the recourse that was had to the use of magic and charms, it

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(1) His earliest lectures were : *The Spiritual Life of the Soul*, III, 1-77 ; *On the Distinction between True and False Visions*, I, 43-59 ; *On Impulses*, III, 146-157 ; *On Moderation in the Food, and Dress of Prelates*, II, 634-644 ; *On the Fast of the Carthusians*, II, 715-730.

(2) This practice he took from one of his professors. Cfr III, 1436.

(3) N. Clamanges, *Opera* (ed. Lydius), *Epistola XXXI*, p. 111, « praeceptor meus, pio animarum zelo magnopere accensus, caelestique itineris dux atque praemonstrator optimus, Cancellarius Parisiensis ».

being a matter of common knowledge that the Court of King Charles was open to anyone who could promise a cure for the King's insanity (1). Even the young men trained in the University-course of Medicine were joining the ranks of the charlatans, and countenancing superstition, by prescribing amulets and such like for the sick to wear. This practice excited the ire of the Chancellor, and in one of the first talks that he gave to the Licentiates of the Faculty of Medicine, he made sure to set the truth before them, and to support his word with the declarations of the Faculty of Theology, issued in 1389 (2). Such practices were heretical and could nowise be harmonized with their Faith. In characteristic fashion, he illustrated his lesson with an anecdote. He told them how King Philip of France was once offered an image and informed that he would live as long as he kept the image intact. « Full of Faith » said Gerson, « the King threw the image into the fire to prove his confidence in the Power of God » (3).

Another duty that devolved upon Gerson as Chancellor was that of censoring the courses of the professors before they were copied and sold to the students (4). In this way he had ample opportunity to sound out the spirit of the University and to give judgment on the worth of the methods used. His reaction often brought him into conflict with the other professors and prompted his movement for the reform of Teaching with which we shall have to do in a later Chapter (5). With the students he was if anything over-scrupulous in examination. Had he not been limited in his authority he would certainly have turned away many applicants for degrees. But to his great sorrow he was hampered by a ruling that if six of the professors stood sponsor for a candidate the Chancellor could not refuse him his degree. While he complained of this system Gerson was even more averse to the demands made upon him by the Nations and by the noblemen, that he be

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(1) In 1419, Gerson was to warn the Dauphin : « non adhibeat fidem superstitionibus et sortilegiis merito suspectis de operatione daemonum vel invocatione, aut de pacto cum eis secreto vel expresso. » I, 200.

(2) I, 210-216, *Tract on the Errors of Magic.*

(3) I, 216.

(4) Bulaeus, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 390.

(5) Cfr Chapter V : *Educational Reform.*

« courteous » with their subjects (1). This he stoutly refused to do, although it might have opened for him the way to high position in the State ; for he hated sham as he hated sin and would not be the dupe of anyone.

One of the finest appreciations ever made of the character of Gerson is to be found in the *History of Charles VI*, by Jouvenal des Ursins (1388-1473) who in his youth learned to admire the man. He tells us that Gerson « *avait accoustumé de s'acquitter loyaument* » (2). Strict honesty was the basic note of his character (3). His early training had been rude, his associates may not have been born to the purple, and his own nature was hasty. As a diplomat, he was to have no success. He was too open in speaking his convictions and too little a respecter of persons. The friends of Gerson were to find this out at a later day when they sent him as Head of a Representation to the Court of Avignon, to urge Benedict to accede to the proposition of Cession. The attitude of Benedict had never been enthusiastic, and although he avowed good-will, his procrastinations were beginning to irk even his best followers. Gerson had fought well and successfully for the cause of Avignon, and no doubt there were many who looked upon his coming as that of a loyal subject seeking reward for his fidelity. If such were the case, Gerson lost no time in making his position clear. « I can speak more freely », he said, « because I am conscious of no ambition nor desire for gain,... but I am come to say the truth in behalf of the public welfare » (4). He was come to advise Benedict and his Curia of

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(1) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VI, pp. 1158-1159. « Parmi les prélats assemblés au mois de février 1399, plus d'un, paraît-il, exprima la crainte d'être exposé, de la part du roi, de la reine, ou des princes, à des sollicitations qui ressembleraient à des ordres ». Leclercq cites many instances of interference. Gerson, *Opera*, IV, 725, « Cogor enim pluribus dominis magnis valde, qui adversissimi sunt complacere, vel obsequi. »

(2) P. 255, Paris, 1653, in fol.

(3) Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 775, « der Grundton und bestimmende Zug dieses Charakters aber war Frommigkeit im edelste Sinne des Wortes ». Schwab quotes a Sermon *(On the Man Born Blind)*, III, 1095-1096, in which Gerson declared that we must « love truth, defend it, and adore it ».

(4) II, 62, « Haec ego loquor eo libentius quo mihi conscius sum, non ex quaestu, non ambitu, non ad laudem propriae meae professionis ; sed pro assertione veritatis et utilitate publica haec dicere ».

the truth of their position, and of the needs of the Church. « Princes and Prelates » he told them, « were not above the Law ». They must rule for the good of their subjects, and in the instance of their reign becoming harmful to those under their care, they must resign (1). Such was the key-note he struck then and from which his plans for reform and his theory of authority were to develop.

This sermon roused the ire of the Court of Avignon. Not alone had the independent attitude of the Chancellor hurt, but Benedict himself was chagrined by a passage in the speech in which Gerson described a Pontiff famed for his eloquence, his knowledge of Law, and his asceticism, active and strong in body, whose ambition carried him to such an extreme, that he refused counsel of learned men, because, as he said, « his position was such that none but himself could understand it » (2). Schwab declares that no offense to Benedict was meant and that Gerson clearly indicated that he did not mean to describe the Avignon Antipope with those words, since the phrase, « *mentior si non tempore meo* », starts the sentence (3). But there was hardly any reason why Gerson should tell the anecdote unless he meant to point out the ridiculousness of the position of Benedict and sting him with the reproach that despite disclaimer, he was ambitious. The description fitted the Pontiff very well, and the reaction of Benedict to the sermon leaves little room for doubt (4). He

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(1) II, 61 ; cfr. II, 262. In his *Resumptio* for the Licentiate (1392), Gerson said : « cum superioritas spiritualis jurisdictionis... instituta propter bonum commune,... si ejus retentio non proficiat sed cedat in detrimentum, debet dimitti ».

(2) II, 63, « Mentior si non tempore meo talis apparuit, et verborum copia et Jurium scientia et abstinentia famatus, corpore vegeto et forti ; quem usque ad hanc insaniam reddidit ambitio caeca, contemptrix alieni omnis concilii, laudibusque suis credula, ut putaverit post illusiones plurimas esse verus Papa concorditer electus ; ... cum praeterea moneretur ut sapientiorum crederet concilio : non, inquit, quia factum meum tale es ut alius a me nemo illud intelligat. »

(3) Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 174.

(4) Hefele-Leclercq, o. c., vol. VI, p. 1159, « Pierre, issu de la noble famille de Luna,... s'était distingué à Montpellier comme professeur de droit canon... De petite taille, d'éloquence et d'esprit, c'était un homme de grande culture et de mœurs irréprochables. »

got quite up-in-arms about it ; but he did not make a frontal attack, nor attempt a direct refutation. Rather, he questioned the orthodoxy of some of Gerson's statements. The charge had an effect and would seem despite Gerson's protest to have been warranted to a degree (1). For his expression was not always careful, and in the heat of controversy he was known more than once to make extreme statements of which in sober moments he would disapprove. In this instance, much of the effect of his mission was lost when word went around that he had made a poor case of it at Marseilles and Tarascon. In self defense, he sent a copy of his sermon to the Duke of Orleans (2), who had, for that matter, been present when the sermon was delivered, and with the copy a letter declaring that the quotations made were false and malicious. Another letter went to his friend d'Ailly, — who was at Tarascon at the time, — in which Gerson begged that he defend him against the false charges that were made (3).

As far as adherence to the cause of Avignon was concerned, this was, for Gerson, the beginning of the end. He had had suspicions as to the sincerity of Peter de Luna as early as the year 1394 (4), when the latter as delegate of Clement VII at the French Court, — to bolster up the cause of his patron against the attacks of the University and the demands for resignation, — threw the lot of the Pope into the hands of the Crown, being sure that by the favors Clement had granted the nobles the cause was already won (5). Gerson had been called upon

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(1) F. Ehrle, *Martin de Alpartils Chronica Actitatorum temporibus Domini Benedicti XIII*, p. 495 *(Quellen und Forschungen aus dem Gebiete der Geschichte herausgegeben von der Görresges.*, Band XII), Paderborn, 1906.

(2) II, 74. Letter to the Duke of Orleans, written on the Eve of the Feast of the Epiphany, 1404 (N. S.).

(3) II, 74-75, « digneris accipe baculum defensionis meae in hoc articulo ».

(4) III, 1213. Gerson tells the Princes that their aid is necessary. He compared those preventing peace in the Church to the Jews who denied the Resurrection of Christ. « Hi de quibus loquor, sunt in hac materia, qui per falsa media, per minas et consuetudines, per promissiones impediunt illos qui habent voluntatem in hac materia. »

(5) *Chronique du Religieux de St. Denys*, vol., II, pp. 136-188 ; Valois, o. c., vol. II, p. 417 ff.; F. Bliemetzrieder, o. c., pp. 120-130.

at the time to voice the opinion of the University against the tendency of the nobles to put private gain ahead of the welfare of the kingdom and of the Church, and he condemned the work of « an ambitious greed » which cultivated divisions in the Church for its own profit (1). Peter de Luna had not been amongst the instigators of the Schism, but once won to the cause of Avignon he became a most valued lieutenant; he was then occupied in Paris with the idea of turning the nobles against the scholars who had become too intractable for his liking. Gerson lost no opportunity to picture the man as he saw him, and to try to shake him from his shrewd scheming. Had he been more diplomatic he would have had far less trouble in life ; but the general good of the Church was the object of his striving, and he could not bring himself to hope for honors at the sacrifice of his ideals.

Therein lay the discretion of the Chancellor. He looked at things from afar. He strove for moderation and the maintenance of the traditional authority in the Church. At the time he acceded to office there was an acute problem facing the University, whether to cast off allegiance from the new Pope of Avignon, and trust to the local Prelates and the nobles to rule the Church in France until such time as reunion of the whole Church would be possible (2). The danger inherent in such a project was seen and proclaimed by Gerson. Already the temporal power had crippled the unity of Catholicism in France by making the Church subservient to the interests of the State. The nobles could not be trusted to work for a peace that would be harmful to their own interests. They would find themselves sorely tempted to pilfer the riches of a defenceless Church. Besides, without a center of authority in the Church what assurance was there that the breach already opened by the Schism would not widen and let in the plague of heresy (3) ? It had been thus that the separation of the Latin and Greek Churches came about, and there was danger that

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(1) III, 1212, « ambitiosa cupiditas, omnibus generaliter. Non est mirandum si ambitiosa cupiditas leviter introduxerit divisionem damnosissimam ».

(2) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VI, pp. 1168-1185 ; Valois, *o. c.*, pp. 47-87.

(3) II, 7-9.

once France separated from Benedict and started to drift, a schism within the Schism would commence and go on until there could be no hope of healing. The only reason warranting separation from the Pope in France would be that by such means there was prospect of ending the Schism (1).

Not all at the University shared these views. In fact, since 1394, demands for separation from Benedict were becoming stronger. There had been no joy at the news of his election : but his promise « to resign the Pontificate with the same rapidity with which he removed his hat » won sympathy, and, for a year, attention from the Dukes and the scholars (2). But after haggling through the summer months of 1395, and meeting everywhere the obduracy of Benedict, the Ambassadors of the University began to lose heart (3). One by one, the Cardinals had separated from Benedict and declared for the policy of Cession (4). Asked to do likewise, he refused. To procrastinate, and wear down the determination of his opponents he requested that the substance of all the arguments advanced be written out and presented to him. He was told that such action was useless and unnecessary for *somme toute* it consisted in but one word : Resign (5). He suggested a conference with his adversary; they insisted on the *via cessionis*. In a last session July 8th, Ambassadors and Cardinals asked Benedict to accept their propositions; but he refused again, with an unusual vigor and determination as Valois reports (6). With that the Ambassadors departed (7), but not before certain

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(1) II, 7, « si enim Universitas Parisiensis determinet aliud in materia tanta et tam ardua et quae tangit personam summi status et adhaerentes sibi, formidandum est ne Papa et sui qui similiter Clerici sunt aliqua sentiunt in oppositum, et ita fiet schisma in iis qui sunt Fidei. »

(2) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VI, p. 1157.

(3) *Ibid.*, pp. 1168-1183.

(4) *Ibid.*, p. 1178 ff.; Valois, *o. c.*, vol. III, pp. 59-63.

(5) *Ibid.*, p. 1171.

(6) Valois, *o. c.*, vol. III, p. 63, gives two versions of the response of Benedict. « Plutôt que d'adopter la voie de cession, ce qui fortifierait le parti de l'intrus, je préférerais la mort. » « Je préférerais être brûlé vif. »

(7) « An unknown hand affixed to the doors of the Papal Palace a declaration containing six points, to the effect that every Prelate is bound to abdicate to avoid a schism, — that Benedict was, furthermore, bound by his oath to resign, — failing to do so, he made himself suspect of heresy, — obedience was not due him, but rather he became liable to punishment ». Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VI, p. 1182.

documents had been circulated to indicate their intention to break from him.

Once in Paris, and their report made, they caused the University to seethe. Some of the Doctors advocated an immediate break, but after a conference it was decided to try again to persuade Benedict (1). He, meantime, was at pains to bring failure on the plans of the French, stirring opposition to them with the charge that their sole reason in seeking his resignation was that they might thus have a Frenchman as Pope at Avignon (2). All this heated the flames of animosity at the University, and in February 1396, nine propositions were published in the form of questions, which indicated clearly the determination to resolve the problem. It was asked : Can the Pope be obliged to accept the *via cessionis ?* Is he not guilty of perjury if he does not accept it ? Is he not suspect of schism ? Are the Cardinals bound to obey him ? Can he be forced to abdicate ? These and other questions of the same tenor were asked (3). It seemed certain that the break was at hand, when Gerson raised his voice against these propositions, and urged that his confreres be circumspect. « Of what avail to pose such questions when we do not know what those who are subject to Rome are thinking. For in separating from Benedict, we may constitute a new schism, and that on a matter of Faith between ourselves and those of the other Obedience » (4). He counseled, therefore, that Ambassadors be sent to the countries and universities that were in submission to the Pope of Rome to see if concerted action were possible. This advice won the day, and messengers went out from the University in 1396, to England, Germany, Bohemia and Spain (5). This was the means of bringing about in 1398 a conference between Charles VI of France and the Emperor

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(1) *Ibid.*, p. 1183 ; Valois, *o. c.*, p. 75.

(2) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VI, p. 1184 ; quotes Martène-Durand, *Thesaurus*, t. II, col. 1134.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 1185.

(4) II, 7-9.

(5) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VI, p. 1192 ; an interesting study of the activities of one of these ambassadors is to be found in A. Coville, *Recherches sur Jean Courtecuisse et ses œuvres oratoires*, in the *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 1904, t. LXV, p. 474 ff.

Wenceslaus whose consent was necessary to the success of the project (1). New influence was brought to bear upon both claimants for the Papacy, and a really honest effort was begun in the two camps to seek out a means to unite the Church. One result of the Chancellor's intervention is certainly this, that he prevented for a few years the break that was to come between France and the Avignon Pontiff.

In all this, Gerson was an advocate for the cause of peace. For unless there was calm amongst the Nations, and unless the Princes and Prelates of France united upon a definite programme of action there was no hope for reunion, but rather certitude that error and heresy would thrive (2). There was definitely fixed in his mind an ideal of Reform that he could not advance with any hope of success if the present disorders continued. So, then, he became the spokesman for peace. In 1389, he blessed the reign of St. Louis because it had given peace to the Church and permitted progress (3). In 1392, when he advocated that Clement VII resign his position, it was in the hope that the *via cessionis* would bring peace again to the Church (4). We see him as the orator of the University when a solemn procession was held in the cause of national and religious peace (5). At the Court, his efforts for peace often brought him into opposition with those whose power was to be feared. Thus in 1394 and 1402 he stood out against the Duke of Burgundy, and in 1405, he was to make an open attack upon the Duke of Orleans for causing dissension in the land (6). And the whole explanation of his having embraced the cause of Benedict XIII in 1396 was not that he was convinced of the justice of Benedict's title, so much as because he felt that the

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(1) The Emperor was the official protector of the Church. Wenceslaus also was the principal supporter of the Pope of Rome. To guarantee the success of the plan, stress had to be brought to bear on both Pontiffs at the same time.

(2) II, 40, « et (quod deterius est) jam errores et haereses caput extollebant ».

(3) III, 1457-1467, *Conference for the Feast of St. Louis*, delivered by Gerson in the College of Navarre.

(4) II, 261-267, *A Lecture on Spiritual Jurisdiction.*

(5) IV, 565-571.

(6) IV, 583-672, Sermon entitled : *Long Live the King*, in the course of which Gerson condemned those who were disturbing the Peace.

continuation of obedience to the French Pontiff was the sole way open to peace (1). In 1407, he was to give clear expression to the ideal he had held so long. Gregory XII, immediately following his election at Rome, had sent out to the University of Paris a declaration of his willingness to unite with Benedict in resigning. Gerson preached before the united assembly of the royalty, ecclesiastics, and the scholars of the realm shortly after this announcement was made. « Thanks be to God who has given us peace at last ! For thirty years », he cried, « have we longed for peace, and striven by pilgrimages and temporal alliances to attain it. And now it is here » (2). But peace was not yet, nor was it to be realized before many more years had passed.

In his striving for peace, Gerson had one great end in view. He wanted to set about the task of restoring the vitality of the Church by recalling both Pastor and Flock to a sense of their duties. But until there was a lull in the endless bickering what hope could he have of success ? He had a definite idea to reform the Church (3). He set out deliberately to effect it. But he knew that single-handed he could accomplish nothing. In the first place who, in a place of authority, was to sponsor the reform ? He turned to Benedict, but had no response. He tried to keep ideals of righteousness in the minds of the Princes, and to win them from their traditional criteria of material gain, but to no avail. There are things in the life of the Chancellor that are difficult to harmonize with his affirmation that he was timid by nature, unless we realize that he was under the domination of an ideal that spurred him to go on and on. Once he accepted the position of Chancellor he entered into a contest that was to brook no let or hindrance.

His task was difficult from the first. He had to appear in

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(1) II, 7-9 ; 14-17.

(2) IV, 567. *Sermon for the Peace of the Church.* Cfr III, 1260, in a sermon before the Court, made probably in 1405-06, Gerson says : « Meditare... meditare quod pulchriorem hereditatem, ditiorem thesaurum Domino Delphino, et aliis tuis filiis relinquere non potes, quam pacem. »

(3) IV, 595-596. Sermon before the King. Gerson represents his lower nature as arguing against his ideals, saying : « better be quiet in a troubled time such as this. Who are you to attempt to reform the Church ? »

the Court and take part in a life that shocked him. Every action of his was subject to censure from one or other of the Dukes. With Burgundy and Orleans at loggerheads, and both trying to win him completely to their service, he had a difficult time to maintain his independence and courage (1). Knowledge of the absence of morality from the Court-life was another thing that lessened his respect for his superiors, although he never went to the extreme of berating the courtiers as Jacques Legrand was to do. Gerson really admired Philip the Bold of Burgundy. But if he respected his will, he respected it next to the Will of God (2). For a time, at the Court, he actually tried to please, and prepared his sermons so as to appeal to the intellectual vanity of the Dukes. But his sermon was never without point for all that, and he indicated a moral that should have impressed them, were they not indifferent. This obduracy caused him to lose fervor. « What good is it », he cried, « to lose my time and stay late in the night polishing sermons that men come to listen to in a spirit of vain curiosity. I am doing no good at all, and one could well apply to me the words of the Scripture : *Stulto labore consumeris* » (3). As long as he was at Court however, and on whatever occasion he addressed the Dukes, he lost no chance to challenge their self-love and to assure them that it was the cause of all the evils of the day (4).

At the hands of the Hierarchy he suffered another disillusionment. From them really should have come the inspiration for the reform of the Church. Indeed there were many who talked generally about the matter, but balked at a definite plan of action (5). Those whom Clement VII had graced with the

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(1) IV, 725.

(2) IV, 723. « Mandatus sum quippe ab illo cui post Deum me et omnes operas meas debeo. »

(3) IV, 725.

(4) « Mihi apparebat quod ubi proprius amor adhaerebat, omnia persequebatur : ... In hominibus Curiae generat adulationem,... in Dominis praelia, odia, jurgia et dissensiones. Quot divisiones videmus malidictam hanc, furi similem, in sancta Ecclesia fecisse, » III, 1382.

(5) Pastor, o. c., vol. I, p. 162, « Les hommes qui se lamentaient le plus haut de la corruption et des désordres de l'Église, n'étaient pas tous des modèles de piété ni de bonnes mœurs. Beaucoup... eussent bien fait de commencer par se réformer eux-mêmes. »

Cardinalate, had gathered-in many of the choice benefices of France and were averse to starting any movement which, if they could not control it, might end up in their being deprived of their living. There was a great tendancy also for the ecclesiastics to don all the splendor of temporal-Princes, to the disgust of the nobles and the scandal of the poor (1). In 1394, Gerson, following the lead of his former preceptor, Henry of Langenstein, charged such churchmen with the responsibility of starting the Schism (2). Ambition he said, made them betray their trust, and kept them false guardians of the Faith. Amongst the Bishops, those who took immediate care of their dioceses were exceptions. Men of the mentality of John Dominici, and Peter d'Ailly were rare ; and there were some dioceses that never knew an Episcopal Visitation during the whole duration of the Schism (3). A rule of love and of fatherly interest that should have characterized their office became quite unknown. Few outside of the Mendicant Orders bothered themselves with the poor and the afflicted, and even these were being drawn away from their ideals and were opening themselves to the charge of laziness and selfishness (4). The ambition of the Secular Rulers seemed to have found reflexion throughout. « Better a spiritually-minded King such as Louis IX to rule the temporalities of the Church than to have such as these in control of the spiritual powers, » preached Gerson in 1390 (5). The principle from which he worked was that « the spiritual jurisdiction was for the good of souls, and should be abandoned freely at such time as it is found to do harm to souls ». This opinion was expressed in 1392 (6). It

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(1) II, 638, « Apud saeculares Principes et alios plus irritetur ista pompa quam in honore teneatur... immo et pauperes minus audent ad tales accedere ».

(2) « Heu metuendissime Domine ! qualem spem habemus Christianitatis negotia bene se habitura, cum tales stipendiarii cupidae ambitionis, ut oblivio Dei, ignorantia, superstitio... ipsam occupant Christianitatem, ipsam gubernant », III, 1212.

(3) Ehrhard, *o. c.*, p. 296 ; Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 138, note 2; Gerson, *Opera*, II, pp. 544-545.

(4) III, 1387 ; III, 549.

(5) III, 1467, « Interrogo nunc, quis istorum duorum, an Sanctus Rex, vel Praelatus talis (i. e. Qui de spiritualibus nihil,... de temporalibus totum cogitat, 1466) suos subditos potius spiritualiter regere dicendus. »

(6) II, 261-267.

was a call to make sacrifice, but the times were not generous, and his appeal went unheard.

Despite the fact that the University of Paris, as a whole, was working for the settlement of the Schism, many of the members of the University were not purely altruistic in their motives, and Benedict XIII like Clement VII before him was sure to find, among the august body, individuals whom he could turn to his liking (1). Not alone that, but most of the Doctors were dependent upon one or other of the Dukes, through whose patronage they held their places. So that they were all watching carefully the trend of events, fearful lest some unexpected turn would deprive them of whatever they had in the way of income and future prospect. According, therefore, as Burgundy or Orleans rose in power the policies of the University could be seen to change in color and conviction (2). Few had the courage of Gerson to stand for the right from start to finish, regardless of consequences. The House of Burgundy had many times aided him ; he respected deeply the will of Philip the Bold but none the less he opposed him when he felt it his duty to do so (3). In striking opposition to his rigidity was the subservience of John Petit, likewise in the service of Burgundy, who rallied to the defense of his master perhaps at the expense of his conscience, because he was bound by an oath of fidelity (4). The controversy which Gerson waged against the teaching of Petit on the question of Tyrannicide covered a long period of years, and proved to Burgundy and his followers that righteousness could not be bought.

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(1) *Chronique du Religieux de St. Denys*, vol. II, p. 130, tells of the attempts made by Benedict to influence the Doctors d'Ailly and Des-Champs. Cfr Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 129 ; Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VI, p. 1199.

(2) A characteristic gesture was the condemnation of the Duke of Burgundy and the policy of Tyrannicide in 1414-15, when Orleans was in power, and the repeal of the decision in 1419 when Burgundians, with the aid of the English, governed Paris.

(3) IV, 723 ; Burgundy favored the policy of breaking with Avignon in 1394 ; Gerson opposed him.

(4) Otto Cartellieri, *Am Hofe der Herzöge von Burgund*, p. 42 ff., Basle, 1926. Cartellieri remarks that : « Petit hatte aus der herzoglichen Kasse Mittel für sein Studium erhalte und war dem Herzog Johann durch einen besonderen Eid verpflichtet ».

In the three years 1395-1397 to which attention has been chiefly directed in this chapter Gerson maintained steadfastly the idea of Papal authority. Almost everyone who thinks of Gerson connects him immediately with the theory of the Superiority of the Council over the Pope. With that he was indeed connected, but it was a conviction that grew upon him through experience of the futility of other means to bring about a peace. In 1392 in one of the most important of his academic exercices as a student Gerson declared not for the *via concilii*, but for the *via cessionis* as the best means to solve the problem of Schism (1). In other words he awaited the decision of the Pope. He knew the position of William of Occam and of Marsilius on the question of Papal authority. He had heard it repeated by Henry of Langenstein and Conrad of Gelnhausen in 1381 (2). It is remarkable that he did not at that time accept their theories. That he looked to the Pope to set about to heal the wounds of the Church is clear. In 1396 he defended the attitude of Benedict and saw the reasonableness of his (Benedict's) position in refusing to use the *via cessionis* unless sure that it would be effective (3). At the same time, and again two years later, he condemned the interference in Church affairs by the King (4). As long as there was possibility of bringing Benedict to accede to the proposition of resigning of his own volition, Gerson avoided the more extreme views, and if he finally embraced them it was because of his fear lest the Schism endure to the detriment of unity in the Church, and to the danger of Faith (5). Had he suspected for

(1) II, 265, « Ex iis omnibus videtur sequi sine temeraria assertione, quod in praesenti schismate, quilibet contendentes de Papatu... tenentur... dimittere status suos ».

(2) A. Hauck, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands*, vol. V, 3rd and 4th ed., pp. 735-738, Leipzig, 1920. Langenstein's *Epistola Pacis* dates from 1379; it was followed a few months later by the *Epistola Brevis* of Gelnhausen, Aug. 31, 1399. The *Concilium Pacis* of Langenstein dates from 1381. Cfr Gerson, *Opera*, II, 809-840.

(3) II, 14-17, *Tract on the Schism.*

(4) II, 92, « sint inter nos aliqui ambitiosi ad beneficia... aliqui odiosi ad Dominum Benedictum, unde tamen constat substractionem per tales emersisse. »

(5) It is noteworthy that in 1402, Gerson argued against the expediency of calling a General Council to decide the question whether or not France would return to the Obedience of Benedict from which she had withdrawn 1398, II, 29.

a moment the fruit which the idea of Conciliar Supremacy would bear, he would have been the first to condemn it.

The sphere of action into which Gerson had entered on assuming the duties of Chancellor was most distasteful to him. He was working against his own wish and inclination. He had no desire to take part in the broils and the skirmishing connected with the Court-life. He would have preferred to have lived his own life apart, and to have advanced in the knowledge and love of God. But with the hardihood of a boy from the farm-land he clung tenaciously to his task once he began it (1). He wanted to elevate the standards of his day. But the men of his time were not ready to hear him. The Court turned him away by its grossness and indifference ; the ecclesiastics were not full-hearted in their response ; his confreres at the University were not above suspicion ; Benedict as Head of Christianity was immobile. To an ordinary resolution there would be reason enough for despair. That Gerson did not immediately lose heart, but with unfaltering step marched ever towards his ideal, no matter at what cost of sacrifice is a striking indication that he possessed the quality that we know not as wisdom or generosity but as saintliness.

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(1) In later life Gerson characterizes his youthful zeal in this wise : « Porro non negaverim, me prioribus annis zelum hujusmodi (i. e. non dissimulandum, non parcendum, non scandalum formidandum) sensisse : sed quam frequenter fuerit non secundum scientiam, me docuerunt exitus », II, 772.

CHAPTER V

THE REFORM IN EDUCATION

For three years, as Chancellor of the University, Gerson was at the storm center of Paris. His scrupulosity in examinations made him unpopular with the students, and many of the professors were hurt by his manner of treating their subjects. But it was chiefly at the Court that a spirit of opposition was raised against him. Neither the Duke of Burgundy nor the Duke of Orleans could be sure of his support, and the former had reason enough to suspect that all the favors he could lavish on Gerson would not turn him one way or another. In the question which agitated the University from 1395 until 1397, Gerson took sides with Orleans and against the Duke of Burgundy who was vigorously opposed to Benedict XIII and urged that France sever her relations with Avignon, and take up a stand of neutrality (1). This certainly brought upon Gerson the ire of Burgundy who despite his claims to be a patron of learning was certainly not an advocate of free-speech, nor did he relish the idea of having his opinions contradicted. But Gerson was, as he said later « *vrai français* » (2), and belonged to no party but that of the King. He was one of the few in his day who stood above partisanship, but he paid dearly for it. All of the difficulties contingent upon his activities at the University and his duties at the Court preyed upon him, and distracted him so that he could not keep himself in a devout frame of mind to celebrate his Mass each day and his spiritual life suffered much in consequence (3).

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(1) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VI, pp. 1227-1228.

(2) IV, 668. In a speech before the King in 1413, Gerson remarks that all talk of party division in the kingdom should be abandoned : « Je suis au roi, et non à aultre. Je suis vrai français. »

(3) IV, 726 : « Cogor inter haec et similia missas et orationes omittere, vel irrecollectus dicere. »

Finally he could stand the life no longer, and despite the protests of friends that they could not do without him, and in the face of objections that he should not leave his post as Chancellor of the University, he fled from the turmoil of Paris for the comparative quiet of Bruges. Some time previously, he had been favored by the Duke of Burgundy with the benefice of Dean in the church of St. Donatian at Bruges (1). As long as he was busy at the University, he should have been permitted to draw the revenues of this office, which amounted to two hundred francs a year (2). It is questionable whether or not he received a penny of this before 1397, for he had complained that he was forced to beg, and that because of lack of money he could not establish himself in the dignity that became his office, but « had to live with Grammarians » (3). Be that as it may, we can be sure that when he went to the north, Gerson had no intention other than that of gaining peace of mind.

Bruges was at that time living on the fruits of a great prosperity that was hers in the latter part of the Fourteenth Century. Ships still came in from England laden with the wool that was to be spun into fine fabric by the *tisserands*, and sold in the market-place, or in the houses belonging to some of the most famous merchants of Europe. The reign of Louis of Male saw the city at its brightest and busiest moment, and when the Duke of Burgundy inherited Bruges along with the rest of Flanders in 1384 he had under his dominion a city that rivaled Paris for its beauty and importance (4).

But with the temporal control of the country assured, Philip the Bold tried to bolster up the cause of Avignon by winning the adherence of his Northern Provinces to the Obedience of Pope Clement VII. For six years, efforts had been made to turn Louis of Male from Rome. But he was not to be moved. The University of Paris had not been inactive in the matter, as

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(1) *Gallia Christiana*, vol. V, col. 258, Paris, 1781.

(2) *Compte de Josset de Hal*, cited by Salembier in an article entitled : *Deux conciles inconnus de Cambrai*, Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VI, p. 1541 (appendix III).

(3) IV, 726.

(4) H. Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, vol. II, 3rd ed., p. 195 ff.

we know from a speech of Peter d'Ailly who reminded Clement VII, at Avignon, that the « University had always striven to win Flanders for Avignon and that she had just sent emissaries to put a stop to the Schism there » (1). Constant attempts were made, until, in 1393, came success in Bruges, when the clergy protested against the conduct of the representative of Rome, and sought favor from Avignon, as Lille had done in 1384, and Ypres in 1392 (2). But though much of the clergy could change their obedience from one Pope to another, the people would not and refused for the most part to receive the Sacraments from priests subject to the French Pope, preferring to troop off to Ghent, — which had held firm to Rome, — for their Easter Communion. The scandal of the situation became quite apparent when the Baptisms, the Marriages, the Communions administered by the adherents of one Obedience were called invalid by the members of the other (3).

This was the situation when Gerson arrived, and he could not but be deeply affected by it. In Paris the evil effects of the Schism were visible enough, but they were not nearly as accentuated as in Bruges, where there was danger of heresy. In Paris passions had run high because the prestige of the nation was involved; in Bruges no interest but that of Faith prompted the people whose fervor was aroused by the condemnations of the opposition which were declaimed in the market-place by Ambassadors from the Episcopal city of Liége (4). No sooner did Gerson realize the difficulty than he outlined for the clergy and the people of Bruges a plan of conduct in religious duties that was sane and in the circumstances would prove practical. « In a Schism as doubtful as the present one, it is rash, dangerous and scandalous to say that all who are attached to one or other party, or those who wish to remain neutral are outside the way of salvation, excommunicated or suspect of schism. It is licit, more than that, it is a matter of

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(1) Salembier, *Deux conciles inconnus de Cambrai*, art. in Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VI, p. 1519.
(2) *Ibid.*, pp. 1536-1537.
(3) *Ibid.*, p. 1542.
(4) *Ibid.*, pp. 1534-1537.

caution to make the obedience to one or other Pope conditional. It is rash, and smacking of heresy to say that the Sacraments of the Church have not their effect when administered by the priests of the other Obedience, that priests of the opposing party are not consecrated, infants not baptized, and the Sacrament of the Altar not consecrated. Similarly it is scandalous to say that one may not hear a Mass offered by a priest of the other Obedience, nor receive the Sacraments from his hands. It would be more useful to seek to accomplish the return of the Church to unity by urging both Popes to resort to the way of Cession rather than to trouble souls by placing them under the ban of Excommunication » (1).

Of this document just quoted, Salembier speaks in words of approbation : « the document we have just cited is absolutely irreproachable, the decisions that it makes are according to the language of good sense and true doctrine ; they are as wise as they were opportune » (2). Certainly the teaching of Gerson, were it heeded, would have gone far to settle the doubts of the people of Bruges and help them to a solution of their difficulties. We have no indication that success attended this effort for peace. But we may conclude from the fact of the many friendships formed between Gerson and the religious of Flanders, with whom he was to keep in correspondence through life, that some response was made, if not by the people, at least by the priests to his appeal for concord (3).

At this time, a movement which had taken its inspiration from the deep spirituality of John Ruysbroeck, and which had gained popularity with the preaching of Gerard Groote, the Reform of the Brethren of the Common Life, better known as the *Devotio Moderna*, was solidifying itself in the Low-Countries. While the development of the movement was towards the east rather than in the direction of Bruges, Gerson would none the less hear of it. That he sympathized fully with the

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(1) II, 3-7, *On the Manner of Conducting One's self in a Time of Schism.*

(2) Salembier, art. c., p. 1542.

(3) One striking instance is that a Carthusain monk Bartholomew called upon Gerson for his judgment on the orthodoxy of Ruysbroeck, cfr I, 59.

zeal of the Brethren, may be seen from the way in which he cited their manner of life (1), and also by the fact that when an effort was made to suppress the Order, he vigorously defended them (2). It would however be a mistake to think that he took the inspiration for his own preaching and reforming activity from these men. His ideals were formed before he left Paris.

But it must none the less be admitted that for Gerson the stay in Bruges was a source of fine inspiration. Several very important tracts on the Spiritual Life were written for his sisters during the four years that he passed in the Venice of the North (3). In addition to that, he found time to write out the matter of his courses at the University, and to form projects for further lectures of a practical nature (4). He completed a *Harmony of the Four Gospels* (5), and wrote on the *Manner of Interpreting the Scriptures* (6). That he composed the last named tract to meet a need in the North is quite likely, for he spoke against « certain people who were so taken up with their errors that they had no wish nor desire to hear anything that was opposed » (7). He insisted that the Church is the Judge of the Scriptures, and that the « litteral sense of the Scriptures must be taken according to the manner that she determines, and not according to the judgment of anyone at all » (8). Another tract that was written at Bruges and which

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(1) II, 696, *De Laude Scriptorum :* « Sunt adhuc, ut accepi, nonnulli Professores Regulae beatissimi Augustini apud Hollandiam, quorum labor scribendi pascit eos temporalibus subsidiis de pretio Librorum, remanentibus apud se plurimis ad spirituale solatium. »

(2) I, 467-470, cfr Chapter IX.

(3) Cfr p. 26.

(4) The *Lectures on the Gospel of St. Mark*, comprised in several tracts were composed in Bruges. Cfr Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 268, note 2.

(5) IV, 83-202, *Monotessarion sive unum ex quattuor Evangeliis.*

(6) I, 1-7, *Propositions on the Literal Sense of the Scriptures and the Causes of Error.*

(7) I, 5 : « Quidam enim sic ament errores suos, ut contraria eis non velint cogitare vel audire ». Ruysbroeck, who combatted the errors of the Beghards, spoke of them in almost the same fashion as the quotation just given from Gerson, saying : « they would rather die than change their doctrines ». Cfr d'Aygalliers, *o. c.*, p. 145.

(8) I, 3 : « Sensus Scripturae litteralis judicandus est, prout Ecclesia Spiritu Sancto inspirata et gubernata determinavit, et non ad cujuslibet arbitrium vel interpretationem. »

would seem to bear witness to Gerson's preoccupation with the problems of the Church in that locality is his work on the *Manner of Distinguishing True from False Visions* (1). Gerson had lectured on the subject at Paris, to be sure, but he mentions an interview which he had had at Artois, on the way to Bruges, which may be taken as a guarantee of the opportuneness of the tract. He mentions by name the heretic sects to be found in Flanders, and instances Marie of Valenciennes as one whose doctrines should be condemned, because her life could not bear the tests that he would apply. These tests consisted in a close scrutiny of the conduct of the visionaries, to see what was their humility, their discretion, their patience, their honesty, and chiefly their spirit of charity. But the moral drawn went closer home than that. « If we are to be the ones to look for the character of Divine Revelation in others, let us cling to God and the Scriptures through which He has spoken and still speaks to us » (2). Such an answer to the charges of the orthodox against the practices of the overzealous, whose lapses from the Faith were due more to lack of guidance than to ill-will is a striking proof of the clear vision of the man. It is worthy of note also, that at a time when many theologians were opposed to any attempt to foster in the lives of the simple people devotions other than those which could be performed in an external fashion, because of the danger of heresy and error, he had the courage to write all manner of direction to his sisters to help them in their private devotions (3).

Nor was this all. In the long period of his absence from the University, he had given much thought to the situation that prevailed there. Removed from the scene of combat, he could survey all the better the field, using his own experience as the starting-point, and supplementing it by the frequent reports he had from his friends in Paris. The year after his departure

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(1) I, 43-59.

(2) I, 58.

(3) III, 545 : « Mirari nonnulli fortasse poterunt ac quaerere proinde, cur de materia tam sublimi, puta de vita contemplativa, scripserim tractatum praesentem idiotis simplicibusque, videlicet sororibus meis... Nec earum me simplicitas ab opere illo retardare habet, cum secundum intellectus sui capacitatem velim procedere. »

from the University, the policy of the Duke of Burgundy had prevailed and France had separated from Avignon. Not only that, but open war had broken out between the nation and Benedict, and Geoffrey Boucicaut, brother of the Marshal of France, sat down with his troops before the fortress of Avignon (1). Bad as that was, and though it were contrary to all Gerson's wishes and plans, it did not move him nearly as much as the sight of the disorders apparent in the University. There was discord amongst the Nations. Many of the Pedagogies were doing harm to their students, either « by the ignorance of the Professors, by their negligence, by their too great avidity for praise, or what was far worse, by the miserable example that they gave the students in their lives » (2). So that the youth of the University was going to the bad, and if they professed the Christian Faith, their lives showed no concord with their beliefs (3). Given such a state of affairs, the spiritual welfare of the people of the city was bound to suffer as well, for in the absence of the Dominicans from the University the students had to be called upon to supply the need of sermons. The College of Navarre and the Sorbonne were true to their traditions, and professors and students held aloof from the rest; but the members of the former institution thought it well to write to Gerson to ask his counsel. At the time that these demands came to him, Gerson was not well. An old illness had come upon him and kept him inactive for some time (4); but he answered the call for direction, and started a movement that was to bring about a reform in the manner of teaching.

In his *First Letter to the Students of the College of*

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(1) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VI, p. 1232. Benedict was wounded during one of the attacks.

(2) I, 110-111 : « plurium nimis exuberanti Paedagogorum multitudine, quorum aliqui (salva laude bonorum et absque contumelia cujusque dixerim) vel caeca ignorantia, vel segni negligentia, vel quaestuosa maleque placente adulatione, vel inepta levitate, vel quod intolerabiliter pestiferum est, contagioso perversissimae vitae exemplo, ipsis suis scholaribus noxii sunt. »

(3) I, 111 : « sic adolescentia frena laxantur, sic eunt in adinventionibus suis dimissi secundum desideria cordis eorum. »

(4) I, 110 : « olim pluries sed novissime crebrius atque profondius in quodam otio adversae valetudinis meae. »

Navarre, Gerson disclaimed any intention, or, for that matter, any ability sufficient to warrant his words being hailed as valuable. There was already too much written, and of too little worth. He had rather, he said, not attempt to write new things, but would seek to express old ideas in a new way. All difficulty at the University was to be traced to the desire for originality that was a fruit of Occamism. In the commentary on the *Book of Sentences* it would be well to refer back to the writings of such as Bonaventure, Durandus, Henry of Ghent and St. Thomas of Aquin whose *Secunda secundae*, Gerson said, was of exceptional worth. These men were not to be scoffed at. They with such as Anselm, Bernard, and Richard of St. Victor, formed the surest base for the Dogma, the Moral, and the Mystic teaching, and it would be well for the students to become well acquainted with their ideas. For the rest, he urged them that they be discreet and charitable in the *disputa*, and that they seek truth modestly as becomes those who would seek it earnestly (1).

In a *Second Letter* which followed shortly after the one just mentioned, Gerson cut more closely to the heart of the problem. He rehearsed the situation at the University, and said how he was tempted to write to the Rector, or to the different Pedagogies in protest. But were he to write to the collective Colleges a letter expressing his views, he was sure that they would laugh at it (2). One plea he did make to the Faculty at Navarre which shows distinctly the trend of his thoughts. He asked that the Dominicans be permitted to return to the University, and take up their work of teaching and preaching. It was, he averred, most unchristian to display such rigor against a whole congregation. It was, moreover, against the best interests of the University, for she had suffered in the loss of sermons and of scholastic exercises. He urged that the University be lenient to herself if not to others (3). What was undoubtedly in the back of Gerson's head at the

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(1) I, 106-109.

(2) I, 111 : « Scriberem ad omnes collective, sed videte ne stulto labore consumerer, quoniam parvitatis meae zelum plures eorum more suo irriderent. »

(3) I, 112 : « si non vis aliis parcere, parce tibi ipsi. »

time was to bring back to the University-center, a force strong enough to counteract the evil effects of the Occamist teaching then in vogue. The bulk of the Dominican Order had resisted the incursions of Nominalism, and in advocating their return, Gerson was certainly giving countenance to those who demanded a return to the traditions of Realist Philosophy. However we shall see more of this further on.

The next step that was made was the attempt to resign his position as Chancellor. Many reasons were alleged why he should yield his place, but prominent amongst them was the declaration that « he was forced to overlook the false doctrine that others were teaching, or with great personal danger protest against them, if indeed he were permitted to protest » (1). This letter reached Paris in March 1401, and created not a little stir, coming as it did so soon after his declaration of the needs of the University (2). The friends of Gerson would not hear of his resignation however, and the Duke of Burgundy commanded him to return to the City, promising, no doubt, an increase of power and his support in the reforms that were advocated.

In the meantime Gerson had written a *Letter to d'Ailly on the Reform of Theology*. This is dated Bruges, April 1st, 1401 (N. S.). In it, the Church is described as « full of sores » and the Prelates blamed for much of the evil (3). But when later in Spring, Gerson received the summons from the Duke of Burgundy, he wrote to announce that he would return to Paris when his health had sufficiently improved to permit the journey (4). Meanwhile, he composed, and sent off to the University-City a document which may be considered his Charter of Reform. He condemned the system that wasted time over useless discussions, to the neglect of necessary doctrines. The effect of such teaching, he said was that students were igno-

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(1) IV, 726 : « Cogor pernitiosa dogmata, qualia jam seminata sunt ab aliquibus, vel tacere contra conscientiam, vel cum summo mei, immo veritatis periculo illa per revocationes corrigere, si tamen corrigere... permiserint. »

(2) Denifle-Chatelain, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 42, nº 1761 : « Johannes Gerson, cancellarius Paris, cancellarie renuntiare vult. »

(3) I, 120 : « Ita... occupavit totum corpus Christianitatis ebulliens peccatorum sanies. »

(4) IV, 723.

rant of the truths they should know, that they were perverted in their appreciations, and looked upon simple language as puerile, whereas an indefinite terminology that left plenty of room for debate was considered the ideal (1). Nothing would lead more quickly to the corruption of science than such practices. The result was already patent. The Theological Faculty had become a laughing-stock of the other Faculties, error was rife, and the Church was hurt in her organization and in her administration. He laid down, therefore, a project for reform, as follows : « The Faculty of Theology was not to discuss matters of Faith with the other Faculties of the University present. Measures must be taken to prevent any scandal given by the professors in their teaching or example, and the bachelors and students must be warned against vain and useless doctrines ». As a principal means to effect this, more attention should be paid in commenting on the *Book of Sentences* to the second, third and fourth sections, that is to say, to the parts which dealt with the Creation, the Incarnation and the Sacraments of the Church. In this way, those who were to have the care of the people would be better prepared for their ministry than they were under the system in vogue, which spent almost all the time arguing about the manner of the knowledge of God obtained by reason (2). A final and important demand was that more interest be taken for the instruction of the people, and that tracts be drawn up to explain the « principal points of our religion, and especially dealing with the Commandments, for the use of those who rarely have a sermon » (3).

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(1) I, 122 : « ne tractentur ita communiter doctrinae inutiles sine fructu et soliditate, quoniam per eas doctrinam ad salutem necessariae et utiles deferuntur. » Cfr I, 104.

(2) Ehrle, *Der Sentenzenkommentar Peters von Candia*, p. 77. Speaking of John of Ripa and Peter of Candia, two of the most famous of the Nominalists at the end of the Fourteenth Century, Ehrle says : « Wie bei Johannes, so finden wir auch bei Peter die für den Nominalisten typische einseitige Bevorzugung des ersten und zweiten Sentenzenbuches und die Vernachlässigung des dritten und vierten mit ihrem fast ausschliesslich theologischen Stoff. »

(3) I, 124 : « sicut olim tempore quarumdam pestilentiarum, Facultas Medicorum composuit tractatulum ad informandum singulos ; ita fieret per Facultatem, vel per mandato ejus aliquis tractatulus super punctis principalibus nostrae religionis, et specialiter de Praeceptis, ad instructionem simplicium, quibus nullus sermo aut raro fit, aut male fit. »

That this was in the nature of an ultimatum is proved by the manner in which Gerson ended his letter. He says : « And unless the Faculty do this, or some thing of a like nature, it will devolve perhaps upon the Chancellor to provide some such method, by refusing the Licentiate to such as are trained in false doctrines, even though the Faculty demand that the Degree be granted, — although it is much better for Chancellor and Faculty to be of one mind in such matters (1). » No doubt can thus be had of the purpose that was Gerson's when he returned to Paris to take up anew his duties as Chancellor, in the fall of the year 1401.

Gerson once described a theologian as « a good man, versed in the Scriptures, — not simply with a learning of the intellect, but rather, and much more, of the heart, so that once he understood a truth he could translate it into his own life (2) ». This was the ideal that he carried back to Paris and strove to inculcate in his courses at the University. He hit out against the faults of the University-life. There was nothing to be said against an earnest pursuit of knowledge, but he had much against those who studied simply to make themselves known, *qui student solum ut sciant vel sciantur* (3). He had no objection to those who were at great pains to acquire knowledge, but he was bitter in his criticism of such as used knowledge as a means to gain places of honor and wealth. So much for the mentality of the students. As to their beliefs, he was more pointed still. It has been shown in a previous Chapter how the ultimate result of Occamism was to relegate Faith and the doctrines of Faith into the realm of the intangible, and to teach that there was contradiction between the findings of reason and the truths that are had from Divine Revelation (4).

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(1) I, 124.

(2) I, 177 : « Theologum nominamus *bonum virum in sacris litteris eruditum ;* non quidem intellectione solius intellectus; sed multo magis affectus ; ut ea quae per Theologiam intelligit, traducat... in affectum cordis, et executionem operis. » Cfr R. Thomassy, *Jean Gerson, chancelier de Notre-Dame et de l'Université de Paris*, p. 172, Paris, 1844.

(3) IV, 337 : « cognovimus, proh dolor, aliquos quibus omnis doctrina miscens cum speculativa... diriderent doctores devotos ut idiotas et vetulas. »

(4) Cfr Chapter III, p. 44.

We have then a clear indication of his declaration of independence from Occamism when he set out to make the Faith of the students the most vital factor in their lives. He set up Theology as the Mother of the Sciences and taught that it was impossible to separate them. More, the Articles of Faith were by no means in contradiction to the findings of Natural Science (1). His teaching became thus a contradiction to many of the favorite theses of the Occamists, against whose training he was beginning to react.

Perhaps the best example of the trend of this teaching is to be seen in the lectures which Gerson delivered in 1402, *Against Vain Curiosity in Matters of Faith* (2). Humility he set down as the requisite for all good learning, and pride as the cause of all sin. It was thus « pride of intellect that spurred Philosophers, and Theologians after them, to be too curious in matters of Faith ». With how much greater assurance humility could answer many problems with the words : « I do not know, God knows. » For the students one thing was necessary. « They should believe the Gospel and let that suffice. » Thus began a slogan that was to recur again and again throughout the teaching of Gerson : « *Do Penance, and Believe the Gospel !* (3) » As to the manner of his teaching, it was not according to the traditional method of the University either. He developed his theme somewhat according to the style followed in an *exposition*, but his divisions were more clearly marked and less numerous than was customary (4).

In this *Lecture against Vain Curiosity*, the reform theory of Gerson finds a fuller expression than he had hitherto given. He instanced many signs of vain curiosity, each of which

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(1) I, 92 : « articulos Fidei nullo modo esse contra Philosophiam naturalem ; sed eidem potius consoni sunt, quamquam eos attingere et invenire suum non est. »

(2) I, 86-106.

(3) I, 90 : « Abjiciamus ergo superbiam a nobis viri Patres et Fratres,... alioquin non satis obedimus dicenti Christo : *Poenitemini et credite Evangelio.* »

(4) Thurot, *o. c.*, pp. 73-74, tells of the two types of Lectures in use at the University : The *Expositio* which consisted in the discussion of a problem in all its minor details and in endless subdivisions, — and the *Quaestio* which was a critical examination of propositions taken from some master or other.

characterized some practice at the University. The search for new Doctrine and new Doctors, was the first tendency condemned. This was characteristic of the Occamists. They had no respect for the «*antiqui*» but prided themselves upon building a *via moderna* to all knowledge. « This », said Gerson « is the principal reason why opinions are changing so frequently. It is a striving after new things when time should be spent to form an appreciation of the things found (1). » Another fault that he found was that the Religious Schools drew lines of distinction not according to truth but according to the traditions of the Orders. Gerson himself sought out truth in any form. He was accustomed to say that the intellect must « seek to know the truth, strive to assert and defend the truth, and honor the truth ». He could not therefore comprehend the attitude of those who would close the door against the good features of a teaching not their own (2).

Other criticisms that he leveled against the manner of teaching were expressed more as a precautionary means of stopping the assumptions of learning on the part of the students, than as a criticism of the professor. He urged that men do not enter into disputes on subjects of which their knowledge was limited, that they be not too hasty in calling their opponents heretics, that they do not despise solid doctrines as not worth while because they could be clearly understood. It was folly, he said, to declare that a good style was the one that was the most difficult to understand ; rather « the clearer speech is, the more praiseworthy it becomes (3) ». In concluding his Lecture, Gerson held out for a central School of Theology for all the Church. For the lessons to be given in such a School he had a plan already fixed, no doubt, but he never gave expression to it. One thing we can be certain of, namely, that the Philosophy he would have taught there would certainly not be that which was prevailing at the time in the University.

Rumor of these talks by the Chancellor went out through

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(1) I, 97 : « Hanc esse magnam aut praecipuam causam existimo, cur opiniones toties revertuntur et mutantur. »

(2) III, 1095-1096, *Sermon on the Man Born Blind.*

(3) I, 105.

the Colleges, and invitations came to him to address to the Faculty and student-body of certain Houses on his projects of reform. We have in a sermon preached on the Feast of St. Louis a record of one of his conferences (1). Gerson's reputation had gone before him, and in the bulletins that were posted announcing his sermon, some « wag » had pictured Gerson as a man with a carping disposition who was satisfied with nothing but wanted to reform everything. Gerson protested against this criticism of his aim in coming to the College. « If the comment was meant in good faith, » he said, « then it showed a lack of information on the part of him who made the statement ; if it was made in a spirit of spite, it proved a lack of charity (2). » As he proceeded in his speech, he had ample chance to realize that the students did not welcome his message ; for no sooner had he started to address them than they commenced an outcry, and though they did finally quiet down they paid no heed to his remarks. None the less Gerson continued, and turning to the masters and preceptors he read to them a list of qualities he demanded in a teacher (3). Since he takes the place of the parent in the training of youth, the teacher has the duty of looking after the religious instruction of his pupils. He must not only be free from faults, but must oppose lax conversation and morals in his students. He must be patient, level-tempered, teaching by example and rousing the interest of his hearers by lively anecdote. Gerson tells of one master, Reginald Gobart, who never lectured to his students without suggesting for them some means of progress in the spiritual life, with the result that the greater part of his students advanced very high in ecclesiastical dignity (4). These considerations were offered to the professors as means to help them cultivate in the lives of their students strong habits of Faith, and the Christian spirit that would bring about in the University the ideal that Gerson sought.

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(1) III, 1427-1439, *Sermon at Paris on the Feast of St. Louis.*

(2) III, 1430 : « Nam si bonus fuit, plane non secundum scientiam et conscientiam ; si malignus et lividus, certe non secundum charitatem. »

(3) Gerson based his rules on the principles set down in the *Institutiones* of Quintilian. Cfr III, 1435.

(4) III, 1436.

It is remarkable testimony to the influence of Gerson, that the Dominicans were permitted to return to the University in August, 1403, shortly after France, partly through his insistent demand, returned to the Obedience of the Pope of Avignon (1). There is no question but that from the time of his return in 1402, he had a hand in all that the University did, and with each new achievement his power increased. But the event which marks the culmination of his efforts, an event which was not altogether consequent upon the return of the Dominicans to Paris, was the change of the Philosophy taught in the University from Nominalism to Realism. Ehrle reports that from « ca. 1405, until ca. 1437, the Realists controlled the teaching at the University of Paris (2) ». This is a remarkable commentary to the reform movement of Gerson. It is striking that one of the Rectors of the University in 1405 was Gerard Machet (3), a pupil of Gerson, whose ideals were modeled upon those of his former master. The change of policy could not have been made without the consent of the Chancellor, who was Head of the Faculty of Theology at the time, and certainly if the about-face that was made were not according to Gerson's ideal he would have left some form of protest against such action. Cardinal Ehrle gives Gerson the credit for starting that reaction against Occamism (4). In view of all the activity on his part that preceded this change of

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(1) From the time of the condemnation, Gerson had insisted that the sentence against the Order was too severe. Cfr Denifle-Chatelain, *Chartularium*, vol. III, p. 506 ; Gerson, *Opera*, I, 112 ; « ergo non tam quod liceat ex Juris rigore quam quid expediat exquiratur. » Ehrle, *o. c.*, pp. 154-155.

(2) Ehrle, *o. c.*, p. 154 : « Diese genaue Übereinstimmen der bisher völlig unbekannten Vorherrschaft des Realismus an der Pariser Universität von ca. 1405 bis ca. 1437 stellt sie unzweifelhaft fest. »

(3) Feret, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 299.

(4) Fr. Ehrle, *Der Sentenzenkommentar Peters von Candia*, p. 139, « neben dem waschechten Nominalismus eines Peter d'Ailly stand der gemassigtere eines Johann Gerson » ; also *ibid.*, p. 92 : « Ja wir müssen, um eine.... Reaktion gegen den Ockamismus zu finden, bis zu Gerson... herabsteigen, der, obwohl selbst in ihm aufgewachsen, auf Grund seiner angestammten Innerlichkeit das Seichte und Unchristliche der herrschenden Theologie *herausfühlte, bekampfte* und die in der theologischen Literatur des 15. Jahrhunderts vorherrschende moralisch-ascetische Richtung anbahnte. » Italics are my own (A).

policy in the University, it can reasonably be concluded that his was the hand that guided the change. Certainly his reiterated pleas that scholars give their attention to the « *antiqui* », that the works of Bonaventure, Alexander of Hales, and St. Thomas be consulted find an explanation in that act of 1405. And it is easy to see why he was so bitter in his criticism of the mentality of the professors and students who adhered to the practices that were born of Occamism.

One further instance to mark the thoroughness of the reform that Gerson advocated in the manner of educating. Though he was Chancellor of the University he did not think it beneath his dignity to take upon himself the training of little children. Men of his own day looked at this work as a folly of his (1) ; in our time such devotion would be considered remarkable despite all the stress that we put on child-welfare. His project was to train the character of youth so that when temptations of any sort came to them they would be strong to resist. His ideal was to surround the young with precautions against evil, and form them so well that they would carry new vigor into the life of the Church. For the men of his own generation he had not much hope. They had been harmed by the manner of their formation. But upon the proper training of the young depended all hope for the reform (2). Some objected to Gerson that there were other duties to engross his attention, and that he was belittling himself when he left aside his functions as Chancellor, and summoned little children for their lessons in the Catechism. His reponse was this : « I am sure I do not know if anything can be of more importance than to snatch souls from the Gates of Hell. Men tell me than I can better fulfill such a ministry from the pulpit... but in my opinion it can neither be done more efficaciously nor more fruitfully (3). » « Surrounded by evil, and in the absence of good influence over them, the children of the City were like waifs begging

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(1) III, 285 : Many protested against Gerson's activity. « Comminantur vel mihi vel parvulis, ne accedant ad me. »

(2) II, 549 : « Ecclesiae siquidem reformatio debet inchoari a parvulis, quoniam ejus deformatio venit ab eis prave et nequiter institutis. »

(3) III, 287.

bread, and there were none to reach it to them (1). » This was not according to the example and spirit of Christ.

The child had to be helped to save himself. For Gerson, the best way to do this, was to get down to the level of the child, to learn what were the difficulties that beset him, to win his affection by sympathy, and to offer him encouragement in private instruction as well as by sermon. Against the many influences that might have corrupted the youth of the city, he set up a cry of protest, and demanded of the public authorities that they take means to remove from the shops and public places images that were suggestive of evil (2). But apart from negative precautions, Gerson used other ways to help boys shake off bad habits and put on the mantle of a good life. His first principle was that nothing was better for the preservation of good-morals than a good education (3). So convinced was he of that truth that he insisted upon the maintenance of schools in all the country districts, and urged in his directions for the visitation of dioceses, that attention be paid to the organization of schools and the manner of the education of the young. « With the young the reformation of the Church must begin (4). »

« Will we, » he cried « become indolent in this matter ? » « Many means for the training of the young are at our disposition. There are numerous ways of bringing children back to the way that leads to Christ. Preaching is one; private admonition is another; direct instruction is a third; but there remains another means which is proper to the Christian Religion : that is Confession. Let others think as they will, in my humble judgment, Confession is the most direct way of approach to Christ (5). » Gerson's method was to help the young boy lay the ghosts of his past wrong-doing, and to start him anew, with a peaceful conscience, to work out his

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(1) III, 283.

(2) III, 291-292 : *Expostulatio ad publicas potestates adversus corruptionem juventutis per lascivas imaginas.*

(3) III, 1386 : « In primus bona educatio est utilissima pueris ad finem bonum perveniendi. »

(4) II, 109 : « A pueris videtur incipienda ecclesiae reformatio. »

(5) III, 283.

salvation. He wanted to help children to discipline the will to habits of life that would be of use to them when they entered later upon their life-work. His effort was to help the young to the full co-operation with the Sacramental Life of the Church that they would need to sustain them in the trials that the future was to bring them. It was with such intent that he gave his time and his attention, despite the protests of his confreres in the University (1).

The reason for the success of his effort was that Gerson loved the young people, and immediately won their affection and confidence. He had a great saying that in teaching doctrine as in administering medicine one must love and be loved or the effect of the teaching like the effect of the medicine would not be good (2). « He could not, » so he said, « help the children to correct their defects unless he laughed with them, congratulated their little successes, and praised their efforts (3) ». « Whereas when love is lacking in the instructor, of what avail are his lessons, for the children will not listen willingly, nor will they obey commands given. So that a teacher should leave all things aside, and become little for the sake of the children (4). »

Besides drawing up this tract : *On the Leading of the Little Ones to Christ*, as an *apologia* for his theory in the education of the young, Gerson made a programme for the masters of the Cathedral-School of Notre Dame, where no doubt he obtained inspiration for his project. Since his return from Bruges, he had set up quarters in the Cathedral-close and so took part in the activities of those connected with Notre Dame. The suggestions that he made to the masters of the Cathedral-School were that they see to it above all that the students have a good example shown them according to the maxim of Juvenal : « *maxima debetur reverentia* ». After that they were to inspire their charges with the Love of God, and the fear of sin. Pious practices were to be encouraged, and every precau-

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(1) *Ibid.*

(2) III, 805 : « Et vray est que medecine ou dottrine de tant plus prouffite qu'elle vient de celui qui est aymé. »

(3) III, 286.

(4) III, 286 : « Attamen sicubi deest amor quid proderit instructio ? »

tion taken that the children make proper use of the Sacraments (1). There are many features in the rule of life submitted by Gerson that would not stand criticism in modern times when so great stress is put upon educational method. Amongst them may be remarked a spirit of distrust, and the use of a military discipline that cut off freedom of action to a considerable degree during the school-day ; but the general principles are surprisingly practical, and his use of many sources of interest which are held today to be principles of education marks him as a man far in advance of his time.

It must be remembered, however, that much of the activity of Gerson in the reform movement was prompted by his experiences as a teacher in the University. It was in the performance of his duties as Chancellor that realization of the sad conditions of his times dawned upon him, and the attempts he made, as a pedagogue, to reform the method of teaching in the University and in the minor schools, simply foreshadowed a greater reform that he was to advocate and to foster in the lives of the clergy and of the people.

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(1) IV, 717-720 : *Instruction for the Children of Paris.* Another writing of an educational value, the *Work in Three Parts*, drawn for the benefit of priests, religious, people who have the care of the sick and children who need instruction. This work will be discussed in the chapter on the *Reform of the People.*

CHAPTER VI

THE REFORM OF CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

It has not been at all uncommon to make a comparison between the reforms agitated by John Wyclif and his admirer John Hus, and those advocated by Gerson (1). In fact, there are striking resemblances in the theories of the three. All were provoked by a misuse made of temporal goods by ecclesiastics. All condemned the mentality of the day that was ambitious, vain and, amongst scholars especially, taken with a thirst for the unique. Again, all of them stressed the importance of the Scriptures ; all of them demanded a reform in the ministry of the Word, and urged that men be trained for the pulpit so that the instruction of the people would be the better assured. These are great likenesses, but it may not be concluded from them that the three reformers were alike in all their views. They combated like conditions, since they lived in the same epoch when there was need of the rehabilitation of clergy and religious. But whereas Wyclif and, after him, Hus sought to revolutionize, Gerson sought to revise ; where they wished to lop off huge branches in the Church Organization because of a dead-rot that had appeared, Gerson took a more temperate view and tried to quicken the vitality of the Church by pruning carefully at the old boughs.

Striking examples of this difference of ideal and practice may be gathered from every cardinal point in the reforms suggested by all three. The English reformer and the Czech condemned the holding of properties by churchmen, and invited secular powers to dispossess the ecclesiastics ; Gerson admitted the principle of the Benefice System and of temporal power the while he tried to check the misuse that had become

(1) Hergenröther-Kirsch, *Handbuch der allgemeinen Kirchengeschichte*, vol. III, pp. 169-191, Freiburg in Breisgau, 1925; Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 175.

all too common in the disposition of the Church's wealth. Wyclif and Hus stood out against those in authority in the Church ; for the former, the Pope was Antichrist, and according to both of them any ecclesiastic who was not in the State of Grace should be deprived of his authority, and dispossessed (1). Gerson was, despite his accentuation in importance of the General Council, a firm defender of the dignity and the authority of all ecclesiastical superiors. Wyclif and Hus would have dispensed with many of the Sacraments of the Church, and, casting tradition aside, have made the Bible the sole rule of Faith. In his day, none was more zealous than Gerson to preserve the Sacraments in their integrity, and to maintain, even in the interpreting of the Bible the authoritative teaching of the Church.

As has been clearly remarked, Gerson entered upon the work of the reform with no abstract theories. He put his confidence in the training of a clergy filled with the spirit of the Gospels. He saw no better means of cultivating a spirit of piety amongst the people than the life and example of those who gave themselves to the work of saving souls, — the priests (2). But the priests of his day were many of them far from approaching the ideal of the Gospel that they preached, and the lives they lived were in such contrast that not infrequently the people made comparisons between the sermons spoken and the sermons lived by their clergy (3). Reformers of the mind of Wyclif and Hus almost lost heart at the sight of the low standard of living amongst many of their brethren

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(1) Hergenröther-Kirsch, *o. c.*, pp. 172 ff.; Fr. Palacky, *Geschichte von Böhmen, grossentheils nach Urkunden und Handschriften*, vol. III, part. I, pp. 221 ff., Prague, 1845. Cfr Gerson, e. g., II, 660 : « Quidquid avertit a sacramentis suscipiendis, praesertim confessionis, debet rejici. »

(2) Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 679 : « Gerson tritt in seinem Reformgrundsätzen nicht aus dem Geleise der kirchlichen Ordnung. Er ist überhaupt der Ansicht das der Kirche nicht mit abstracten Theorien, sondern mit dem besonnenen Wirken eines vom evangelischen Geiste durchdrungenen Clerus am meisten gedient ist ». Cfr II, 376 : « Republica, vel Ecclesia non regitur per se nec solo dictamine speculativae vel imaginariae rationis gubernatur. »

(3) Gerson himself tells an anecdote of a woman who when asked if a sermon was given (facta) in the church, replied that one was spoken but not lived, « dicta sed non facta », II, 543.

in the priesthood, and assumed so pessimistic an attitude that they could conceive of no cure except a violent one. Gerson opposed the methods of both. He never lost his confidence in the good-will of his fellow-men. He was an optimist throughout. Whereas the others raised a fury of excitement and advertised the evils to all the world, Gerson went quietly to the ones at fault and tried to move them to reform their ways (1). He saw no advantage to be gained by placarding failings that were already well-enough known ; it was against his principles to criticise in public the conduct of ecclesiastical or temporal Princes (2) ; but he did try to prick the consciences of those at fault and, by restoring them to the standards that they should observe, to attain in a calm and reasonable way the reform that others would achieve through turbulence. Thus it is that we have from him many writings, directed to the Bishops, the clergy and the religious, in which he advances suggestions as to the manner of life they should lead. Upon these are based the appreciations that we form in this chapter.

One of the chief causes of the troubles that harassed the Church was the worldliness of the Bishops, and the practice of appointing and consecrating the younger sons of noble families to Bishoprics (3). These latter most often had neither the call nor the worthiness that became their office, and usually gave themselves to the temporal rather than to the spiritual interests of their dioceses. From this came the desire to accumulate benefices, the disregard for the Church-law against simony and non-residence, and the general assumption of splendor that made high ecclesiastics a caste

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(1) Thus his suggestions for the reform were made not to the general public but before ecclesiastical Synods and Councils, and before the Court. Cfr II, 54-73, *Sermon on the Reformation and peace of the Church*, delivered before the Pope ; II, 542-558, *Sermon on the Duties of Pastors*, given at Rheims ; II, 570-575, *Sermon on Clerical Duties*, at Lyons ; III, 1204-1214, *Easter Sermon*, delivered at the Court.

(2) II, 548 : « instruantur denique non detrahere Superioribus absentibus in subditorum praesentia : nam hoc agere quid proficit, nisi ad subversionem auditorum. »

(3) Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 138, note 2 ; Ehrhard, *o. c.*, pp. 294-295 : « der Verweltlichung vieler Bischöfe und die Besetzung zahlreicher Bischofssitze mit den nachgebornen Söhnen fürstlicher und adeliger Familien ohne Rücksucht auf Beruf und sittliche Würdigkeit. »

apart even from inferiors in the priesthood. These are amongst the charges that Henry of Langenstein brought against the higher Clergy in his tract on the *Defects of Ecclesiastics*, which Gerson summarized later on at the Council of Constance (1). They are the reasons that prompted the lack of reverence with which the people held the clergy, and they help explain much of the contradiction in the lives of the lower clergy. The Chronicler of St. Denys reports that Hugh Aubryot, one of the city-officials of Paris swore that he had no Faith in the God of a certain Prelate who never left the Court (2). Such a criterion was common in the Fourteenth Century as it would be in our own. People looked askance at the parade of wealth that was made, and the lower clergy resented the inequality in the disposition of the funds of the Church.

Gerson had spoken against the « pride and ambition » which, he said, were the cause of the Schism in the Church. What hope could be had for the welfare of the Church when the « tributaries of greedy ambition : forgetfulness of God, disobedience, ignorance, superstition and adulation were governing the Church (3) ». In 1396, speaking on the *Desire of the Episcopate*, he criticised those who entered the Episcopacy solely through desire for gain and prestige, and indicated the virtues and the resolve that became so high an office (4). But it was chiefly when he returned to Paris from Bruges that he gave his attention to the problem of the reform in the hierarchy. What he decried most was the assumption of power amongst ecclesiastics and their preoccupation with worldly interests (5). Against those who would defend the splendor of Bishops as being the sole means to maintain respect for their office, he pointedly displayed all the harm that was being done. « It is

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(1) II, 809-840, The *Consilium Pacis* of Langenstein. Cfr III, 314-318, the exerpts which Gerson presented at the Council of Constance.

(2) *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. I, p. 102.

(3) III, 1212 : « qualem spem habemus Christianitatis negotia bene se habenda, cum tales stipendiarii cupidae ambitionis, ut oblivio Dei, etc... occupant Christianitatem, ipsam gubernant. »

(4) II, 565-570.

(5) II, 634-644, *On Temperance in the Food, Dress, and Clothing of Prelates.*

a scandal even to the Princes », he told them. No love for the Prelate resulted, but rather envy, avarice and pride. He had heard with his own ears, a Prince of his own day, who, when he heard talk of moderating all display of wealth that was the cause of rapine and seditions amongst the people, responded : « let the ecclesiastics begin, since it is they who have all the pomp and pride (1). » Gerson endeavored to show that great harm was done by those who lay claim to the honors and the mode of life of the Nobles. By so doing they had inspired more fear or opposition than reverence amongst the faithful, and in appropriating the honors they opened themselves to the accusation that they imitated the excesses of the Nobility as well (2). All of this led to the weakening of Faith, and to the harm of the Church.

One of the worst effects of this condition of affairs was the harsh method of governing that was generally used by superiors in the Church. Instead of ruling by kindness, they ruled rigorously, from afar. Suspensions and excommunications were many (3). The power of priests to absolve was limited to a degree, and made the recourse to the Sacraments less frequent (4). Against all this, Gerson plead for mildness, both for priest and people. General excommunications served only to lessen the respect with which the spiritual arm of the Church was held. It would be far better, if instead of berating their flock Prelates took the trouble to instruct them (5).

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(1) II, 635 : « Respondit indignabundus princeps ille : Incipiant ecclesiastici apud quos tota pompa est, tota superbia, et in vestibus et in prandiis et in omnibus. »

(2) II, 638 : « Amplius dictum est, quod apud saeculares Principes et alios, plus irridetur ista pompa, quam in honore vero teneatur, immo et pauperes minus audent ad tales accedere. »

(3) III, 45 : « Si excommunicatio non est poena, quid aliud poenam appellabimus ? Non solum poena est sed damnosissima poena. Non obstat huic dicto quod medicinalis esse debet. Secunda pars, condemnat eos qui tanta levitate, ne dicam temeritate, fulminant excommunicationes, et irregularitates cum innumerabile multiplicatione statutorum, quae vix aliquem non dicam adimplere, non dicam retinere, intelligere et concordare. sed vel legere tota vita sufficeret ». Cfr also II, 562 ; III, 53.

(4) II, 415-417, *Letter advocating Moderation in Reserving Cases.*

(5) III, 48-55, cfr col. 54 : « expedientius est in multis defectibus illos vel tolerare vel ad bonam finem ordinare, quam per fulminationes sententiarum eos conari funditus extirpari. »

We have from Gerson, in the form of a sermon preached at the Diocesan Synod at Rheims, in the year 1408, the full expression of his ideals for the betterment of the hierarchy. He took as a theme the words : « *The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep* », and attempted in the form of a homily to show how a Prelate should fulfill his ministry. His duty was to see that the Gospel was preached, and the people cared for (1). It was for that purpose that the benefice upon the fruits of which he was living, was instituted. The Bishop must look to the instruction of his flock ; he must set them the example of a good life ; he must rule his diocese immediately, and in a spirit of love (2). But how were the people to learn from him, if his conduct was different from his preaching ? « Physician, heal thyself ! » they would cry out to him.

Some years before, John of Varenne had commenced, at Rheims, a reaction against the evils in Church organization (3). While he was unfortunate in the means he chose to effect his reform, he must be credited with having kindled a fire of zeal in the Archdiocese, which Guy de Roye was to turn to advantage in the period of his administration at Rheims. It was upon the invitation of the Archbishop that Gerson came up from Paris to address the Synod. That Guy de Roye had an admiration for Gerson is attested by his having translated into French some of the tracts of Gerson (4), who returned the esteem of the Archbishop by his eagerness to be of service to him. At the Synod of Rheims, were present many Prelates to whom Gerson attempted to outline the duties of a good Pastor.

One thing that he deplored was that Bishops were getting away from their obligation to preach, and that there was a tendency to look upon that ministry as fit only for the religious and the poor theologians (5). The result was that preaching

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(1) II, 542-558, *Sermon on the Duties of Pastors.*

(2) II, 544 : « Erit prima partitio, de pabulo doctae praedicationis. Erit secunda, de pabulo sanctae conversationis. Erit tertia, de pabulo piae subventionis. »

(3) I, 905-944 ; *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. II, pp. 124 ff.

(4) *Catalogue général des Manuscrits des Bibliothèques publiques de France*, vol. XXXIX (Reims, tome II), p. 438, Paris, 1904.

(5) II, 544 : « Est inquiunt (quidam Praelates) hoc officium, vel Mendicantium vel pauperum Theologorum. »

lost quality, was sown with error, and was used not to rouse piety so much as to touch the generosity of the auditors (1). « Let the Bishops remember, » he said, « that to their office as well as to that of Dean and Pastor, there is attached an obligation to preach (2). » Their benefice obliges them to the performance of this work, which by reason of the make-up of their auditors, became by no means an easy task (3). He indicated the qualities that an orator must possess, qualities of intellect, and of will, and he demanded that the example of those who had to preach the Word be perfect in détail (4). He urged therefore that in every diocese special care be taken to train men properly for the preaching ministry, and that *Summae* of doctrine be drawn up so as to assure that a minimum of instruction be given the people (5). It is remarkable that Gerson urged the re-establishment of diocesan schools for the training of the clergy as one of the chief means for the reform. But it is particularly to his credit that he insisted that special heed be

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(1) II, 545 : « Advertas proinde quam pauci sunt sermones in tam multis, multis inquam numero, sed perfectionis laude rarissimis. Quare ? Quia adulteratur verbum Dei, atque corrumpitur, dum vel quaestus aestimatur pietas, vel dum miscentur errorum mala semina. »

(2) II, 545 : « Addamus ad priora, quod officio cuilibet hierarchico tantum annexa est praedicationis obligatio. »

(3) II, 546 : « Tanta quippe in ovibus pascendis pabulo praedicationis varietas, et velut contrarietas accidit, ut quod unam nutrit, maceret alteram aut mactet. »

(4) II, 546 : « Exigitur ergo ad officium praedicationis ingenium velox, solers atque versatile... exigitur eloquentia torrens et vehemens, suadens et suavis... Exigitur cognitio Scripturarum... Exigitur multiplex experientia actuum humanorum. Exigitur exemplaris vita et conversatio irreprehensibilis... Exigitur denique gustatio spiritus per contemplationem. »

(5) II, 548 : « Fiat in primis juxta praemissa executio Decretalis illius, quae in omni Metropolitana Ecclesia Scholam Theologiae constituit. Nec videtur Schola Mendicantium satis esse. Expediret ut haec institutio extenderetur ad Ecclesias Cathedrales et alias Collegiatas notabiles, sic quod una Praebenda esset ad hos officium salutiferem applicata... Fiat amplius apud ipsos qui se praedicationibus exponunt, examinatio prius circa generalia nostrae Fidei et circa Praecepta et mores ; ut cognoscatur si talia praedicare noverint... seclusis fabulis anilibus et ludibris. Fiat postremo quoad hoc publicatio quorumdam tractatulorum... in quibus generalis tenor nostrae Fidei et Praeceptorum et Sacramentorum contineantur quatenus in eis sacerdotes, et simplices curati legere possunt, et instrui quid ipsi scire, quid alios docere debeant. »

paid to the manner of learning afforded, that attention be given to the study of Theology instead of devoting time to the Natural Sciences : « for with them what science should be taught and learned more than Theology » (1). It was not until the time of the Council of Trent, more than a century and a half later, that these advices were followed generally (2), with a success that proves the correctness of Gerson's policy.

With reference to the duty of leading by example, Gerson entered upon a tirade against all the faults he could find in the lives of ecclesiastics, which were contrary to the state of perfection that became the office. As charity should begin at home, so, said he, should the reform begin at the home of the Prelate (3). Let him look to the care of the sick and the poor. Let him see that his servants do not use their position to grind money out of the needy, and that in no instance a spiritual faculty be given in return for money (4). Let him see that censures are decreased in number, and that when subjects are corrected it be for their advantage and not as a means of exacting from them, since this latter was one of the things that scandalized the people oftenest (5). Finally, he insisted that all the faults that were consequent upon the possession of wealth be overcome, that pomp and vainglorious display be avoided (6). The great virtue of the episcopal state was, he said in another place, the virtue of humility (7). It was opposed

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(1) II, 548.

(2) Concilium Tridentinum, Sessio XXII, De Reformatione.

(3) II, 552 : « Sicut autem charitas incipit a se, sic et reformatio debet inchoari ut primo fiat judicium a domo Praelati, ne forte praeterea contingat objici Praelato : *Medice cura teipsum.* »

(4) II, 552 : « Quocirca suadet... ut fiat efficax, non verbalis provisio contra astutissimam illam... Promotorum et Procuratorum... quia recipiant expensas ab innocentibus absolutis... Est hoc precor aequitas? Fiat amplius observatio Decretalium prohibentium ne detur aliquod omnino in spiritualium administratione. »

(5) II, 552 : « Fiat ulterius correctio subditorum, secundum qualitatem delictorum, et plus ad emendationem... quam ad pecuniarum exactionem, quae gregem simplicem scandalizat frequentius, quam aedificat. »

(6) II, 553 : « Fiat amplius restrictio honesta talis pompae in multitudine onerosa. »

(7) III, 1129-1130 ; cfr II, 638, After decrying the evil done by vain display, Gerson says, speaking of Prelates, that if the poor see them :

to the pride and the ambition that made many desirous of the office, to the love of display that caused all the criticism of their conduct, and to the concern with temporal affairs that led to the neglect of duty. He gave three signs by which this virtue could be recognized : that the office be not sought, that exterior pomp be avoided, and that there be a complete devotion to the spiritual care of the people (1).

The third point that he made in the address at Rheims was the most practical of all. It concerned the government of the diocese. Rules were laid down for the administration of the Sacraments. To insure the respect with which they should be held, attention was to be paid to the worthiness of candidates for Orders, but most of all, a visitation should be made at frequent intervals through the diocese (2). « This, » said Gerson, « is the hinge on which the whole reformation of the Church must swing »(3). It was the means by which the Bishop would best become acquainted with the conditions and the needs of his charges and be able to correct and remedy. Gerson must have had, in his time, much experience in the work of visiting the parishes of a diocese. It is possible that in Cambrai where d'Ailly was Bishop, as well as in Rheims, he exercised the role of official visitor, for he had drawn up a list of instruction for the guidance of Prelates in the visitation of their dioceses, that could only be the fruit of experience (4). The purpose of the inspection was, of course, to detect and root out evil in the lives of priests and people, so that the direction given by Gerson must not be taken as a picture of the times any more than a penal code could be presumed to represent the ideals of a nation. Such measures look only to the breaches of the law and afford no commentary on the innumerable cases of its observance. Withal, it must be admitted that the

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« in humilitate se gerentes, amarent, et eorum aspectu animi aequiores fierent tolerare pauperiem sortis suae. »

(1) III, 1129 « Est autem triplex signum in Praelato suae humilitatis : fuga Praelationis, fuga pompositatis, cura spiritualis. »

(2) II, 556 : « Fiat frequentior, utilior visitatio per totam diocesam vel provinciam, spargendo ubique semen verbi Dei, etiam si fieri potest, presente Praelato principali. »

(3) II, 556 : « Hic est cardo totius reformationis Ecclesiae. »

(4) II, 557 ; II, 558-565, *Sermon on Visitation by Prelates ;* II, 106-110.

conditions against which Gerson drew up his suggestions for the visitation of dioceses were not ideal, for other testimony of a more direct kind can be made to supplement his, and point out a crying need for reform (1).

That the suggestions of Gerson were heeded, is seen in the many other sermons which he preached on the reform of the clergy (2). These were written only in answer to a demand. But for the sake of definiteness there may be adduced the propositions that were drawn up at a Council of Paris held in the year 1411 in preparation for the Council to be held at Rome the next year. Finke in his *Acts Preceding the Council of Constance* gives a list of the advices offered by the University of Paris and the Council of Paris (3). Amongst them are repeated verbatim the suggestions which Gerson made in the Synod of Rheims, and it was determined that the tracts « written both in Latin and in French treating of the manner of visiting dioceses » be sent to the Council of Rome (4). All of the ideas of Gerson find expression in the articles drawn up, and prove how important a hand he had in the matter (5). These ideas dealt not alone with the recall of the Prelates to the standards of former times, but with the measures to be followed for the reform of the lower clergy ; and not alone with the manner of rule in a diocese but with the lives of priests and their relations with the religious.

The virtue which Gerson held out as the characteristic one for the Secular Clergy of the Fifteenth Century was that of Penance (6). In his lectures at the University as much as in

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(1) One need but consult Finke, *Acta Concilii Constanciensis*, vol. II, *Konzilstagebücher, Sermones, Reform-und Verfassungsakten*, pp. 383 ff., for indications of the demand for reform.

(2) II, 576-584, *On the life of Clerics ;* II, 584-596, *Sermon to Prudent and Learned Ecclesiastics*, cfr for a more complete list p. 92, note 1.

(3) H. Finke, *Acta Concilii Constanciensis*, vol. I, *Akten zur Vorgeschichte der Konstanzer Konzils* (1410-1414), pp. 131 ff.

(4) *Ibid.*, p. 132 : « Et offeratur prefato concilio quidam tractulus tam in latino quam in gallico in concilio Remensi provinciali compositus tractans de particulari modo visitandi et ecclesias particulares reformandi. » Cfr II, 558-565.

(5) Articles 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, to name but a few cited by Finke, show a clear relation with Gerson's sermon at Rheims. Cfr Finke, *o. c.*, vol. I, pp. 132-137.

(6) II, 576-584, *Sermon on the life of Clerics*, with *Poenitemini et*

his conferences for the diocesan priests he held to that theme : « *Do Penance and Believe the Gospel* » (1). It was the slogan from which he hoped to achieve the most if it were heeded and applied. For amongst the clergy of his day there was both a lack of penitential spirit and a want of Faith, as the expressions of the people showed, since phrases such as *tortae Jacobitarum*, and *vinum Theologorum* were not used without reason (1). Gerson himself reports that the bourgeois looked with envy on the life of the clergy who, as it seemed to them, did nothing and yet lived comfortably, and he blames the pride and ambition of ecclesiastics as the source of heresy in the Church (2). Had the clergy not abused their offices then the Waldenses would not have found reason to exist. Pastor says as much when he cites « the most clear-sighted of the men of the time, (who) agreed in blaming the calamities of the time on the clergy, on their love of money and temporal goods, in a word on their great egoism » (3). With this selfish spirit had developed, partly under influence of the Philosophy taught in the schools, a doubting attitude on matters of Faith, that may account for the indifference of many to their duty to preach and instruct the people (4). Efforts were made by Bishops to correct this spirit, but none went so directly to the point as that of Gerson when he demanded the reform of Theology, and gave his attention at the University to the teaching of Mystical Theology as a means of stimulating Faith and rousing good resolve in the young clerics soon to succeed to places of authority in the Church. « The ecclesiastical state, » Gerson once said, « consists entirely in a life of example that will provoke

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credite Evangelio as a text : « locus noster... nos admonet, si non obsurdescimus, ut obediamus dicenti Christo : Poenitemini, etc. »

(1) II, 639 : « nam et cibi aliqui, et vina precellentia, tamquam ab inventoribus, aut cultoribus denominantur, sicut dicitur : *Tortae Jacobitarum, et Vinum Theologorum.* »

(2) III, 1212 ; IV, 675 ; II, 83 ; IV, 707 : « Fefellit hoc zelus Waldenses haereticos qui cognoscentes vitia Praelatorum atque sacerdotum, inducti sunt ecclesiasticas dignitates, officia, dignitates ordinatas a Deo, vel negare, vel solis justis ascribere. »

(3) Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 161.

(4) II, 565 : « Item fiat in qualibet dioecesi monitio similis illi quam Episcopus fecit Parisiensis contra loquentes sub specie joci contra Fidem et Sacramenta. »

others to penance. The life of priest is as a mirror in which men may read the virtues that they must possess (1). »

But the men who attained this ideal in the Fifteenth Century were few (2). Rather the bulk of them did more harm by their example than could be corrected by sermons. Many had entered into the work as a living that would demand from them a minimum of effort (3). Others despite good-will were ill-prepared for the trials and the hardships that attended them in the ministry, and had not had training sufficient for the duties they were called upon to perform (4). Their conduct outside the church was bad enough, but it was supplemented by their want of reverence for the mysteries they performed. The keeping of the Feast of the Innocents gave to all the roistering that marks carnivals of to-day free access to the churches, and for the amusement of his people, the priest took a hand in the singing and the games (5). A letter written by the Faculty of Theology of the University recounts things that were done which make unpleasant reading in our day, but not all detail is given of the celebrations, for as the letter says : « one would blush to recall them, much less recount them » (6).

Against such as these, and against those who used their office for the purpose of gain, Gerson read a list of woes in a

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(1) II, 577 : « Addamus adhuc quod status noster, status Ecclesiasticorum, penitus est in exemplum provocativum aliorum ad Poenitentiam, quasi vel liber, vel speculum, vel imago Poenitentiae. »

(2) Ehrhard, *o. c.*, p. 296 : « Nun fehlte es freilich nicht an heiligmassigen Bischöfen und Priestern, die durch Wort und Beispiel das altchristliche Priesterideal zur Geltung zu bringen suchten. Das es aber Ausnahmen waren, beweist schon der Umstand, dass sich im ganzen Umfange der Kirche nur eine geringe Anzahl von Bischöfen und Priestern aus dem 14. und 15. Jahrhundert namhaft machen lasst, deren lichte Gestalten sich von dem dunkeln Hintergrunde der damaligen Zeit abheben. »

(3) II, 107, Gerson advises that care be taken in the choice of subjects for ordination : « ex hoc enim quod janua non satis observata est, processerunt mala in Ecclesia, etc. »

(4) II, 554 : « Fiat examinatio illorum qui ministraturi sunt sacramenta, ne forte sint ignorantes formam necessario requisitam. »

(5) III, 309-310. *Quinque conclusiones super Ludo Stultorum.* Feret, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 111, gives interesting details on the manner of keeping the Feast.

(6) Cited in Feret, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 111, note 2.

sermon which he delivered in 1402, on the *Life of Clerics* (1). At the same moment, in his lectures at the University, he bewailed the fact that there were few who walked before their people and led them by example (2). « As the people are so is the priest, » he asserted, « and would that he were not worse than they » (3). « Woe to those who seem to reverence the saints in their tombs and their relics, but who make no effort to imitate their sanctity (4). » Disregard of the vow of celibacy had become only too common in the century before Gerson, as the history of Provincial Councils shows (5), but in his day it began to be question how far the evil of concubinage should be tolerated (6). Amongst the recommendations that Gerson made for the diocesan visitor were included advices that he see to it that care was exercised in the choice of subjects for ordination, since because of slackness an entrance was given to all the evils that beset the Church (7). He was to see what measures could be taken for the suppression of the Feast of Fools, and other causes of irreverence for religion (8). He was to make judicious inquiry as to the manner of life of the parish

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(1) II, 576-584 : « Vae primum est, claudere viam coeli perversis moribus, et exemplis. Secundum vae, sub praetextu longarum orationum viduas et simpliciores spoliare, etc. »

(2) These were the Lectures on the Gospel of St. Mark, which comprise : IV, 203-228, *Lectiones duae in Evangelium D. Marci ;* I, 43-59, *De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis ;* II, 563-570, *Sermo de desideria et fuga Episcopatus ;* II, 634-644, *De temperantia in cibis, potu et vestitu Praelatorum*, etc. Cfr Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 268, note 2.

(3) IV, 210 : « sed sicut populus ita et sacerdos et utinam non deterior, turpior et perditior sacerdos quam populus. »

(4) II, 584 : « Octavum vae, est in eos qui Sanctis reverentes esse videntur... ipsi tamen eos nequaquam imitentur. »

(5) Hergenröther-Kirsch, *o. c.*, vol. III, p. 304, note 2, gives a list of Councils that ruled on the matter from 1310 until 1429.

(6) II, 109 : « Sciatur cum maturo concilio, an sacerdotes concubinarii sint tolerandi,... ne scilicet pejus eveniat, si ad depellendum quaerentur compelli ex quo sic sunt multiplicati. »

(7) II, 107.

(8) II, 109 : « Sciatur diligenter quae superstitiones regnant per dioecesim, et habeatur modus conveniens eas paulatim, si subito nequeant, extirpandi. Sciatur quomodo ritus ille impiissimus et insanus qui regnat per totam Franciam, poterit evelli aut saltem temperari. De hoc scilicet quod ecclesiastici faciunt vel in die Innocentium, vel in die Circumcisionis, vel in Epiphania Domini,... ubi fit irrisio detestabilis servitii Domini et Sacramentorum. »

priests, and if the man be found worthy he was to be empowered for the performance of his duties, if not, he was to be removed and a suitable priest, secular or religious, was to be given the post (1).

In a companion sermon to the one preached on the *Duties of Pastors* at Rheims, Gerson commented upon the text : *And Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus* (2). It was true, he said that Judas was the very opposite of a good priest, yet how many there were who realized the vices of the traitor (3). The ecclesiastic who had his eye on gain was an Iscariot. One who did not live up to the doctrine that he preached betrayed Christ just as much as Judas did. They did worse, for Judas betrayed the mortal body, but they betrayed the Immortal Body of Christ (4). There were clerics who consumed the patrimony of Christ, and who profaned the Eucharist; there were clerics, who like Judas had been at the washing of the feet, in the Sacrament of Penance, but who would not change their lives; so too, there were those took the benefice for the care of the poor, but neglected their duty (5).

This last point was characteristic in Gerson. He never disputed the theory of the benefice system, but he was constantly up-in-arms over the abuse that was made of it. More than once he tried to prevent the accumulation of benefices amongst some of his fellow-priests. In return for the support given, the holder of the benefice was bound to do penance for the donor (6). So that the life of a priest had to be one of penance, and it is to such a life that a priest voluntarily binds himself (7).

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(1) II, 560 : « Item sciscitetur caute apud parochios de aliis moribus suis ut si sit continens vel concubinarius, si sit lusor ad taxillos, vel aliter scandalosus populo, in tabernis, in juramentis horribilis, etc. »

(2) II, 584-596.

(3) II, 586 : « fortasse videbimus quod haec de nobis fieri potest narratio. Qualis narratio ? Utique quod inter nos sit qui tradiderit Jesum exemplo Judae. »

(4) II, 592 : « nam Judas mortalem, isti immortalem tradunt, vendunt, etc. »

(5) II, 594-595.

(6) II, 577 : « Quae nimirum eleemosynae ideo datae sunt ut poenitentiam pro conferentibus et satisfactionem Deo faciamus. »

(7) *Ibid.* : « Tales esse nos considero, viri Patres et Fratres, et in tali nos esse gradu statuque conspicio quos oportet poenitentiam agere. »

This truth had to be preached and admitted, hard as it was ; for many in the ministry either ignored it or despised it, « otherwise they could never rush with such avidity, and be so headlong in the pursuit of benefices, to which are annexed the obligation of satisfying for the faults of others, for, » said Gerson, « so many are our own failings that all our lifetime will hardly suffice to make amends for them » (1). Gerson had himself received several benefices. He was a canon at Notre Dame and had forty pounds a year for that (2). Until the year 1411, he held the office of Dean in Bruges from which he was entitled to two hundred francs a year (3), and he had obtained in the year 1408 the position of Pastor of the Church of St. John on the Place de Grève in Paris (4). This would seem to be a great deal, but it was as nothing to the holdings of some of his confreres, and in striking contrast to them, he knew when he had sufficient for his wants, for he told the members of the Synod at Rheims that he sought nothing further for himself (5). Not only that, but he was scrupulous in his determination to live up to the obligations that these offices put upon him, and, if he tried to bring others to the conviction of their duty in justice for the benefits which they received under the benefice system, it was because he held true to the ideal himself. In his sermon of the *Lives of Clerics*, he sums up his attitude on the matter of benefices, thus : « The intention of clerics in all their actions must be the honor and love of God, and while they may incidentally desire to acquire temporal goods for themselves it must be only for their decent maintenance in their state and not for ambitious reasons » (6).

In really striking and, it may be said, comforting contrast to all the weak side of the clergy of the Fourteenth Century

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(1) II, 577.

(2) Bulaeus, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 606.

(3) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VI, p. 1541.

(4) Denifle-Chatelain, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 126, n° 1801, note.

(5) II, 549 : « Me sentis ab omni specie quaestus alienum, cum satis jam habeam Deo dono de bonis Ecclesiae. »

(6) II, 579 : « Intentio Ecclesiasticorum in omnibus suis actibus debet esse divinus honor, et ejus obsequium, et consequenter ex incidenti, et quasi accessorie ipsi possent temporalia desiderare... pro sustentatione decenti suorum statuum. »

that we have seen, is the ideal of the life that Gerson held out for them. He traced their succession from the seventy-two disciples of Christ, and so associated them intimately with the Bishops, successors of the Apostles in the work of the Gospel (1). Like the Bishops they had the care of souls, and they were bound to teach and to lead by their example. Consequently, they were living more than the religious in a state of perfection. « The state of Pastors is a state of perfection, not simply perfection to be acquired, but perfection to be exercised since to them is given both the obligation and the authority to lead souls to God according to the three priestly acts which are to purge, to illumine and to perfect (2). Therefore the dignity of Pastors is superior to that of simple religious, whose state is not called a state of perfection nor a life of perfection, but a way of perfection, indicating accordingly that it is a striving for something not possessed (3). »

That he could teach so high an ideal of the life of the Secular Clergy, may serve to indicate that Gerson entertained great hopes for the betterment of the conditions of his time amongst them. With even more assurance may it go to prove that all was not as bad with the clergy as is frequently intimated; for unless there were those who would heed the summons to live up to the obligations of their state, what hope could Gerson have had for the success of his preaching and his teaching. All of the lectures on Mystical Theology find their explanation here. The mystical teaching of Gerson may be said to form the high point in his reform movement, since by

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(1) II, 436 ; II, 249. Gerson speaks of major Prelates and minor ones ; these latter are priests, « qui successores sunt septuaginta duorum Discipulorum. »

(2) II, 530-537, *Tract on Ecclesiastical States ;* cfr p. 534 : « Status curatorum est status perfectionis, non solum acquirendae, sed etiam exercendae, cum sibi competat tam obligatio quam auctoritas reducendi animas ad Deum. »

(3) *Ibid.*, « Status Curatorum superior est in ordine Hierarchico Ecclesiae ad statum simplicium Religiosorum, sicut divinus Dionysius et Hieronymus determinant ». Cfr II, 437 : « sequitur statum Curatorum perfectiorem esse statum simplicium Religiosorum ; simplicium dico, sunt enim in Religionibus velut Curati, ut sint Priores, Abbates, Praepositi, ut tales. »

it he hoped to bring his fellow-priests to hold true to the ideal of their state (1).

There was in the time of Gerson an idea prevalent amongst mystical writers, that the life that was the most perfect was that which approached nearest to the manner of life of the Apostles. These latter were not only contemplatives, but were men of action as well, bound as they were to preach the Gospel. An appreciation such as this may be found in the works of Ruysbroeck (2), it exists also in a sermon of Gerson « *On the Holy Spirit* » wherein he says that the action of the Holy Spirit in the souls of men may be sufficient, abundant, or superabundant and that this last is given to heroic men who lead both the contemplative and the active life (3). It was in this thought that Gerson esteemed so highly the life of the Secular Clergy, whose ministry called upon them to harmonize the perfection which was striven after in the cloisters, with the activity which the care of souls put upon them. For the attainment of this perfection one thing, humanly speaking was necessary : that was the love of God. « Christian perfection, » said Gerson, « is the love of God, and according as anyone is the more fervent in his love of God, he may be judged to be the more perfect » (4).

In recent years, a great Churchman, Cardinal Mercier, rallied to this same idea, and defended it in his *Pastoral Retreat*, and in his Work on the *Interior Life* (5). Speaking to his priests, he said : « Are you not at times tempted to think that perfection is the ideal of the religious and that you are not obliged to carry your ideals so high ? What a mistake to make ! St. Thomas of Aquin whose words are always so measured teaches on the contrary that the religious who is not ordained need only, to meet his vocation, tend to be perfect, while from the priest is exacted, because of his care for souls, perfection

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(1) Most of the Mystical Writings of Gerson are the fruit of his lectures delivered to the Theologians at the University.

(2) G.-J. Waffelaert, *L'union de l'âme aimante avec Dieu, d'après la doctrine du bienheureux Ruysbrouck* (trad. du flamand par R. Hoornaert), pp. 10-11, Bruges, 1916.

(3) III, 1237.

(4) II, 595.

(5) D.-J. Mercier, *Retraite Pastorale*, Louvain, 1926 ; Id., *La Vie Intérieure*, Brussels, 1922.

itself. The Sacrament of Orders, says the holy Doctor, destines its recipient to the highest of duties, it vows him to the service of Christ Himself living in the Sacrament on our altars : so that the soul of the priest should be more holy than that of the religious (1). » The eminent Cardinal reflected throughout the spirit of Gerson and like him, preached that Christ is the Abbot under whose care the clergy must work and whose example they must be keen to follow (2). It was in the hope that his advices might be adopted and the priests of his day be brought to live according to the ideals that he set before them that Gerson kept strong his hopes for the reform of the Church.

With the religious congregations Gerson had frequently to do. The fact that he had three brothers living in convents went a long way to sustain his sympathies, although from the first he was taken with the ideal of the religious life. One great advantage he saw for those who practiced wholeheartedly the life of denial that was entailed by the promises which religious had to make in their profession, was that they were thus protected from all the temptations connected with the possession of temporal goods (3). That they were not exposed to the evils of simony, of frauding and of usurious practice was a great thing (4). But he was not, for all that, unaware of the number who professed but did not practice, and he did not permit his affection to blind him when he considered the lives of those in the convents about him. One of the faults that he condemned was that of particularism, as it is styled by Imbart de la Tour, whereby the thoughts of the monks who were often enough sequestered from the rest of men, became centered in their own Order (5). The concept of equality that was to pre-

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(1) D.-J. Mercier, *Retraite Pastorale*, pp. 305 ff.

(2) D.-J. Mercier, *La Vie Intérieure*, p. 197. Cfr Gerson, *Opera*, III, 743 : « Postremo, obsecro te Frater, cum tuis, per communem Fidei Christianae Religionem quam professi sumus omnes sub Abbate Christo.» The opinion of Cardinal Mercier has not gone uncontradicted, and many declare that he took a meaning from the passage of St. Thomas that was not intented. Gerson himself, I, 469, bears witness that his opinion was not according to St. Thomas.

(3) II, 597-613. Addressed to the Celestines.

(4) II, 600 : « Sunt autem in genere tres in conquisitione victus et vestitus nequam stimuli, unus simoniae, aliud usurae, alter fraudulentiae. »

(5) Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la Réforme*, Paris, 1909, 3 vol. Cfr Gerson, *Opera*, I, 98.

vail within the confines of their monastery was lost when they were brought into contact with the members of other congregations. When members of the congregations gained benefices, and became Pastors, as many of them did, the notion of equality was lost and to the oligarchy of the convents succeeded the triumph of individualism (1).

Manifest from the first at the University was the tendency of the religious to intrude upon the age-old privileges of the seculars. This attitude was the cause of quarrels renewed over and over, from which up till Gerson's day the University emerged triumphant. Frequent efforts had been made to employ the religious for the work of reform in the Church. Popes Benedict XII, Urban V and Alexander V, all of them former members of some one of the religious communities, made the attempt to give the religious access to the privileges of the seculars (2). At the University almost all of the orders were represented, and there accordingly was the center of the struggle that went on from the Thirteenth Century until Gerson's day, and beyond. In 1409 a Franciscan, John Gorel, defended theses that the right to preach, to hear confessions, administer sacraments and receive tithes was not limited to parish-priests as such, since they were not of Divine Institution ; he maintained also that religious were more entitled to preach and hear confessions than were the parish-priests (3).

The University demanded a retraction. Gorel submitted at once and consented to read propositions that were opposed to those he had advanced. They were to the effect that the right to preach and to confess belonged first to the Bishops and Secular Clergy, and only secondarily and as a privilege to the religious (4). But the submission was not as sincere as it seemed for the Friar appealed to Alexander V to support him,

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(1) Imbart de la Tour, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 203.

(2) A. Dufourcq, *Histoire moderne de l'Église*, vol. VII, pp. 115-116 : Feret, *o. c.*, vol. IV, pp. 29-39.

(3) Feret, *o. c.*, p. 30, cites Bulaeus, *Historia Universitatis Parisiensis*, vol. IV, pp. 142-144. Proposition III : « Curatis non competit ut tales sunt praedicare, confessare, extremam unctionem dare, etc. » Proposition IV : « Fratribus competit principalius vel essentialius praedicare et confessiones audire quam curatis. »

(4) Feret, *o. c.*, p. 31.

and on the 4th of October 1409 there was issued from Pisa, where Alexander still remained after his election, a Bull entitled *Mendicantium* to condemn certain propositions which the University had directed against the Mendicants, and to declare their right to hear confessions and to preach. This caused a great stir at the University (1). At first the Faculty insisted that none of the Religious Orders act on the presumption that they had such powers (2). The Dominicans and the Carmelites assented, but the Franciscans and the Augustinians held out. To match this determination, the University obtained from the King a decree forbidding the use of parish-pulpits to all members of the two Orders (3). At the suggestion of the University, sermons were preached in the churches of Paris, to explain the stand against the Mendicants. Amongst the most striking of these addresses was that delivered by Gerson in the Spring of the year 1410. He was chosen no doubt because he was friendly with the religious (4).

In this sermon Gerson reverted to his theme of the necessity of maintaining peace in the Church, and how all should work for it. But the Bull *Mendicantium* was a cause of discord coming so soon after the concord had been established at Pisa (5). Gerson protested that he worked for the honor of the Pope, for his state and for his power. The Pope could do nothing against the truth, and his power was for the edification of the Church (6). He declared that it was against his will that he rose to speak, for he hated disturbance, and had long shown

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(1) *Ibid.*, p. 33, note 2. Cfr II, p. 442-446.

(2) Feret, o. c., p. 33 : « Quand le doute ne fut plus permis, l'Université résolut le retranchement des Mendiants. Les Dominicains et les Carmes s'inclinèrent. Mais les Franciscains entraînèrent les Augustins dans leur résistance. »

(3) Feret, p. 33, quotes Bulaeus, *Historia Universitatis Parisiensis*, vol. V, p. 200 ; Schwab, o. c., pp. 459-460.

(4) II, 431-442, *Sermon contra Bullam Mendicantium.* Cfr Finke, o. c., vol. II, p. 570.

(5) II, 433.

(6) II, 436 : « haec est prima protestatio : quod Dominus Parisiensis, nec sui, nec Universitas, nec ego ipse intendimus aliquid dicere in praejudicium aut sancti Patris nostri inhonorationem... Pro honore suo laboramus pro statu suo, pro officio et potestate sua ; nihil potest contra veritatem. Et data est potestas in aedificationem, non in destructionem. »

himself to be the friend of the Mendicants as was indicated in his defense of the Dominicans (1). « But the parish clergy,» said he, « form a integral part of the Church order, and can not be destroyed ». From this premise he developed the argument that the privileges to preach, to confess, to administer the Sacraments and to receive tithes belonged essentially to the clergy, and that the Mendicants could exercise these duties only as a privilege. « This, » said Gerson, « was clear, since they (the Friars) were not bound to preach nor to hear confessions » (2). Whereas the Secular Clergy were, by their office bound to perform these tasks (3). Before the controversy attained full heat, Alexander died, and his successor, John XXIII finding himself surrounded with difficulties enough, declared the Bull *Mendicantium* suspended in effect, and for a time at least the contest was stopped (4). When later it was renewed, Gerson was no more and so had no part in the matter.

Such tiffs were painful to Gerson. His great exhortation to the clergy of both kinds — secular and religious, — was that they help one another, that they cease contention and emulation, and bear each other's burdens (5). He was not prone to criticise the monastic life of his day, but he was against those who entered religion, « that they might have an easy life, be freed from danger of want, and have opportunity to attain a higher state ». The sole purpose one must have in entering the religious state, « is that of acquiring greater perfection » (6). If he did criticise he was not bitter. If he criticised some who were afflicted with laziness, it must not be thought that he was generalizing and painting all with the same brush (7). The

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(1) II, 436 : « Diu ostendi me odio non habere Mendicantes... ut apparet in reconciliatione Fratrum Praedicatorum. »

(2) II, 439 : « non obligantur concionari, id est praedicare, nec confessiones audire nisi velint. Manifestum est autem quia audiunt confessiones horum quos volunt, et alios dimittunt, sive propter paupertatem, sive aliunde ; ego non scio. »

(3) *Ibid.* : « Curati vero tantum obligantur pauperibus sicut divitibus. »

(4) Feret, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 34.

(5) II, 537 : « Status uterque studeat alter alterius onera portare. »

(6) III, 1387 : « Religio intranda non est, nisi ut major acquiratur perfectio ». *Ibid.*, Gerson criticised those who entered religion « ut habeant vitam otiosam, ut evadent verecundiam, et in mundo paupertatem, aut ad altiorem perveniant statum. »

(7) He has no outbursts against religious in general ; he was at pains

relations that he had in life with the religious orders were of the best and speak well for the standards of spirituality that were lived in many houses. Much of his writings in his later years were on the means of spiritual progress, and they were directed to monks of different congregations, in answer to their demands. Other writings took a more practical tone, and we have from his pen such tracts as the *De Laude Scriptorum; De Libris Legendis a Monacho; De Religionis Perfectione,* which were directed to monks and aimed to stimulate their activity (1).

More than this, Gerson was the defender of the Religious Orders against those who attacked them. Mainly through his intercession at the University, the Jacobites were permitted to return. We have also from him a sterling defense of the Carthusians, and of their mode of life (2). He seems to have been in correspondence with the heads of many houses, and his advices were frequently sought. His work on *Contracts*, was written upon the request of the Abbot of the Grande Chartreuse near Lyons (3). With a Provincial of the Celestines also he was in correspondence, and to that order he was to bequeath all his books (4).

In his contact with the religious as in his dealings with the seculars, Gerson had in mind the one idea, — to keep them all in the life that their office called upon them to lead. If he objected to the display of higher ecclesiastics, it was because of the effect that a parade of wealth would have upon the needy ; similarly, if priests in parish-life and religious in their convents could be made to keep true to the ideal of the Gospel

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to help them improve their lives, by throwing off preoccupation with worldly affairs, by keeping true to their ideals, etc. Cfr II, 550, 693; III, 326, 760 ; III, 64, 85, 240 ; I, 456.

(1) II, 694-703 ; II, 704-711 ; II, 682-692.

(2) II, 711-714, *Contra impugnantes Ordinem Carthusiensem ;* II, 715-730, *De non esu carnium apud Carthusienses.*

(3) III, 165-196. Ch. Le Couteulx, *Annales Ordinis Carthusiensis*, vol. VII, pp. 455-456, Montreuil, 1891.

(4) I, 450, *Epistola ad Provincialem Caelestinorum;* III, 760, Super testamento librorum suorum ad Coelestinos in Avinione. Cfr *Catalogue général des manuscrits des Bibliothèques publiques de France,* vol. XXVII, pp. xxvi-xxvii, According to the Editor of volume XXVII, the Library of Gerson was never received at Avignon.

in the following of Christ, all would be well with the Church. Gerson was a pedagogue. He appreciated fully the force of example, and its value as an educational principle. His reform of the clergy may be summed up, when we say that he urged them to be doers of the Word and not preachers simply, — to lead their flock by loving devotion to their ministry and by the vigor of their example.

CHAPTER VII

THE REFORM AMONGST THE PEOPLE

The disorders which the Schism had given chance to entrench in the lives of the clergy were not without effect upon the people. In many instances they caused a rift of opposition between the clergy and the bourgeois, and made the recourse to the Sacraments of the Church less frequent (1). But rarely, if ever, was the Faith lost entirely. Rather, because they felt the supernatural near at hand, and because they had almost all a vivid fear of Judgment Day, many of the devout tended to build up a religion of the heart, which found a center in the new devotions for the greater part, but for others in emotionalism or superstition (2). The need of the day was to instruct the bulk of the people in the truths of their religion, and to encourage them in its practice. What was desired also was to root out a tendency to individualism in religion that was beginning to make itself manifest and to secure again the solidarity of sympathy, and union of ideal that had made for the Crusades and the Pilgrimages.

To stem the tide of ignorance that was sweeping in upon the life of the Church of the Fourteenth Century, many zealots rose from the ranks of the clergy and religious. All saw that the need lay in the training of the people. To meet this want some were at pains to found Colleges at the University so as to assure the education of priests (3), but few took the more logical step of advocating the revival of the Cathedral and

(1) III, 1033 : « Hic tractari posset invidia quae est inter aliquos de statu Burgensi contra Ecclesiasticos. » Cfr Pastor, o. c., vol. I, pp. 169-172; E. Roy, *Le jour de jugement, mystère français sur le grand schisme*, p. 90, Paris, 1902.

(2) Salembier, o. c., pp. 126-130; Roy, o. c., p. 123 ff.; Gerson, *Opera*, I, 43-59, *De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis.*

(3) Feret, o. c., vol. III, pp. 25-67; vol. IV, pp. 1-10.

Collegial Colleges throughout the land as Gerson did (1). Organized efforts to look after the wants of the needy and to train the young were made by some such as the Jesuati in Italy, and the Brethren of the Common Life in the north (2). But the bulk of the energy spent was by individuals who came for the most part from one or other of the religious orders and who tried by their example to give impulse to the reform of teaching and of morals. Thus from the Carthusians came Gerard of Scheedam and John of Brederode. The Franciscans were represented by Sts. Bernardine of Siena, John Capistran, and Colette. For the Dominicans there were St. Vincent Ferrier whose preaching was heard by multitudes in Spain, France, and Germany, St. Catherine of Siena, and the great mystics of the Rhine, Eckhart, Tauler and Suso. Others there were amongst the Bishops and the clergy as the names of Guy de Roye, and Peter d'Ailly may serve to indicate. But although all were trying, and at almost the same time to bring the people back to a sane spirituality, and all wished to educate priests and people to a better understanding of their Christian inheritance, few had more breadth of view and to none was it given to make a more practical approach to the problem than to Gerson. Not an aspect of the Christian life that he did not touch; not an opportunity for the betterment of the high or the lowly that he passed by. As Chancellor of the University, he could give direction to the King and lend wise counsel as to the manner of training the Dauphin, but at the same moment he did not feel it beneath his dignity to stoop to the level of the boys of the City of Paris. The lessons that he read to the theologians of the University, he adapted for the people of the parishes. The concern that he manifested to keep the standards of the clergy high was seconded only by his zeal to point out to the religious the means of approaching nearer to

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(1) II, 548 : « Expediret amplius ut haec institutio (i. e. Schola Theologiae) extenderetur ad Ecclesias Cathedrales et alias Collegiales notabiles. » Cfr II, 109.

(2) The Jesuati were founded by Blessed John Columbini († 1367) chiefly for the care of the sick. The Brethren of the Common Life looked more to the educational side, to the training of the young. Gerard Groote († 1384) was the founder of this organization.

their ideal. If it be true that all hopes for the reform lay in the instructing of the people, then none, were he saint or scholar took a more intimate part in that reform than did Gerson. One thing that must be remarked is that his activity touched upon all levels of society, that he opposed everywhere all that savored of excess, and that he preached discretion and a respect for authority.

As has already been seen, the late Fourteenth Century was a period of disorder and political unrest. But this was as nothing compared to the crisis that was passing in the life of the Church. Under the stress of the preaching and the writing of such men as St. Vincent Ferrier, of Clamages, Thierry of Nieheim, and Peter of Brussels, anticipation of the Last Day grew (1). Monks and visionaries prophesied the end of the world. The Drama that was staged took on the same spirit, and there was presented many times at Paris a play entitled : *The Last Judgment* (2). Perhaps the best known example of the spirit of prophecy may be had in the utterance of one Telesphorus, a hermit dwelling on the site of the ancient city of Thebes, who prophesied the end of the Schism and the return to the charity of the apostolic times, with France supplanting Germany as the seat of the Empire (3). The prophecy had a wide circulation and excited comment and response from many quarters (4). These forecasts which where much more common

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(1) Salembier, *o. c.*, p. 129 : « St-Vincent Ferrier en faisait le thème habituel de ses prédications. Sept de ses sermons sur dix avaient pour sujet le jugement dernier qu'il croyait proche. » Peter of Brussels, *Sermon on the Calamities of the Church, Signs of the Judgment to come.* This has long been attributed to Gerson. It is printed amongst his works. Cfr II, 309-313. Finke, *Acta Concilii Constanciensis*, vol. II, p. 529, shows it to be a work of Peter of Brussels. The style and the theme are quite foreign to Gerson.

(2) Roy, *Le jour de Jugement ;* Cfr Id., *Études sur le théâtre français du* XIV^e^ *au* XV^e^ *siècle*, Paris, 1902, and *Mystère de la Passion en France du* XIV^e^ au XVI^e^ *siècle*, an article in the *Revue Bourguignonne*, tome XIV, 1904. In the last-named work, Roy shows the influence had by a sermon of Gerson, the *Ad Deum vadit*, upon the writings of more than one playwright of the Fifteenth Century.

(3) Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, pp. 166-171.

(4) *Ibid.*, p. 168 : « Le succès de cet écrit et son caractère anti-allemand déterminèrent, en 1392, un savant hessois, Henri de Langenstein, à publier une réponse. L'auteur commence par s'élever contre la passion pour les prophéties qui faisait alors fureur. »

than one would at first suspect created a wave of emotionalism that swept over Europe, and built up adherents in the heresies of the Flagellanti, and the Brethren of the Free Spirit, to name but the larger manifestations of the agitation that by its vehemence and the suddenness of its apparition was startling. Some feared that they had not nearly requited their sin. So they took up with the penances of the Flagellants. But strange to say, they passed by the Sacramental treasure of the Church, and neglected to have recourse to the ordinary channels of Grace (1). Others like the Beghards could harmonize mystical yearning with gross immorality. Still others clamored for the return to apostolic poverty. These were the zealots, who felt they had to have some center of action for the devout lives they must lead. Lack of guidance sent them astray. That they were extremely numerous is doubtful, despite the remark of Peter of Brussels that there had not been for years as many ill-disposed to the Church as in his day (2).

But there were the indifferent also. For want of instruction from the pulpit, for lack of interest on the part of their pastors, for the neglect of the training of the young, many grew up in utter ignorance of their duties. These became a prey to the gross superstitions that were prevalent. Were they in the pursuit of wealth through trafficking, they became indifferent to the claims that religion had upon their time or their ethics. Were they amongst the crowd that thronged the cities, or were oppressed in the country they were often drawn more to superstitious practices than to the performance of their religious duties, and enjoyed in their leisure hours, the rude pleasures of feasting and routing. Not that they did not stay true to some devotions; the fault too often was that they cluttered their lives with vain observances, to the neglect of their obligations. Many had been let go astray through the remissness

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(1) II, 660 : « Quidquid avertit a sacramentis suscipiendis, praesertim a Sacramento Confessionis, debet rejici fideliter. Constat autem per experientia in multis, quod taliter se flagellantes non curant de sacramento confessionis, dicentes quod haec flagellatio potior est ad delendum peccata, quam quaecumque Confessio. »

(2) II, 313 : « Immo verisimile puto quod a multis annis non fuerint tot malevoli, tot corde rebelles, et animo accensi contra Ecclesiam sicut his diebus. »

of their clergy, and paid more heed to incidentals than to the chief practices of their religion. Thus it was presumed by some that a visit to the Church, and a hasty sprinkling of holy-water sufficed to meet the obligation to hear Mass on Sunday (1). Failure to understand the significance of the mystery being performed made many disrespectful in their actions and in their attitudes while at Mass (2). For such as these not even the new devotions would suffice, and some priests were foolish enough to play upon their superstition as a means of keeping them to duties, or to permit in the Churches the irreverences and liberties such as those connected with the Feast of the Innocents. As a result religion was losing its hold upon the lives of many who while they still believed, were not minded to put themselves out to meet the demands which the Church put upon them.

Even amongst those who made claim to knowledge, errors were rampant that opened a way to heresy. Under the mantle of Astrology,— which was a most appealing study for those who sought the unique, — magic and even sorcery found protection. In the *Chronicle of St. Denis* we read that on the occasion of a duel between an English knight and a French soldier, the arms of the latter were forged under conditions dictated by sorcerers, while at the Court magicians were permitted to try their charms against the King's illness (3). How such practices could gain following amongst the learned is difficult to see unless we admit that Averroism was not entirely blotted out. The belief in a world soul, in the control which the stars exercised over human conduct, and so the denial of human freedom were all part of the Averroistic teachings, and no one could seriously profess such beliefs and still be a Christian (4).

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(1) II, 560 : « Item si parochiani bene servant Festa principalia, veniendo ad Missam, et stando per totum ; vel si recedunt sumpta aqua benedicta, vel post elevationem Corporis Christi. »

(2) II, 109 : « Sciatur quales solent fieri insolentiae in templis et locis sacris. » Cfr II, 561 : « Item si irreverenter se habeant dum baptizantur sui pueri et dum fiunt Matrimonii, vel in aliis Sacramentis, ridendo, jocando, vel garrulando. Item si turbant, vel per se vel per canes..., Divinum Officium. »

(3) *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. I, pp. 396 ff.

(4) I, 194 : « Erraverunt hic omnes fere Gentiles et idolatriae,... errant et superstitiosi sortilegi Christiani et magici. Et eo damnabilius quod

But that men actually did take up with the system of Averroes, and that some went the extreme of practicing black-magic needs no proof other than the condemnations which the Faculty of Theology of Paris handed down in the year 1389 (1). The spirit of *vain curiosity*, as Gerson styled it, led even the scholars who should have had a sobering influence upon the people, into errors which were if anything more scandalous than those of the ignorant.

Despite all the seeming drift of the emotional, the indifferent and the superstitious away from the control of the Church, there were not wanting those who preserved throughout a calm and a constancy in their Faith that is far more remarkable, and certainly was far more common than has been sometimes supposed. We have too often been shown the bad side of the picture, and sufficient pause has not been made to realize that if things were as woeful as some of the reformers described them, then certainly the Church could never have survived as she did. The worst we can say of the period is that the bulk of the people were uninstructed as to their duty, and that many of the learned abused of their learning. The need was to help elevate the ideals of all. The great truths of religion had to be put once more within reach of the masses, models for their imitation had to be offered, and safeguards thrown about them to preserve them from error and wrong-doing.

This was the task to which Gerson put his hand almost at the beginning of his teaching activity. He set about to counteract the force of evil that was working, and it is surprising what was the volume of his writings that aimed at that end, and what was the variety of his appeal. To respond to the needs of the people he drew up compendia of doctrines and devotions (2). He wrote out models of prayer and of medita-

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per Fidem sunt illuminati, et per eam prohibiti ne talibus intendant vel utantur. » Cfr De Wulf, o. c., vol. II, pp. 91-104, deals with the doctrines of the Averroists.

(1) I, 217-219.

(2) I, 124, He stressed the need of such tracts in his *Letter on the Reform of Theology*. He was to insist upon the need again at Rheims. II, 549 : « Fiat postremo... publicatio quorumdam Tractatulorum compositorum, vel componendorum, vel qui jam forte compilati sunt, in

tion to meet the spiritual crises that would arise in the lives of all (1). To make the appeal of his teaching the stronger, he used all of the literary devices that were known in his day. Not infrequently his tracts were written in the form of dialogue or poem ; some others found their inspiration clearly in the drama, and may possibly have been written with the idea of presentation on the stage (2). The figure of allegory which was the delight of the Middle Ages finds frequent expression with him, and in some of his sermons he acted the roles of Prudence and Discretion arguing against Anger, or of Charity trying to soften Justice. All these means he used to insinuate the truth into the lives of the crowd. How well he succeeded is attested by the number of his writings in manuscript form to be found in the great Libraries of France, Italy, Germany and Austria. The tracts which Gerson drew up for the instruction of the people were reproduced by the score, and were so highly appreciated that at the inception of printing they were amongst the first works multiplied. John of Westphalia, Collard Mansion of Bruges, Caxton in England, Ulrich Zell of Cologne, Mareschal of Lyons and Sensenschmidt of Nurenberg — these are names of the more famous who helped in the spread of Gerson's works (3). One tract particularly — an instruction on the Commandments, Confession, and the manner of preparing a soul for death, — achieved great popularity

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quibus generalis tenor nostrae Fidei, et Praeceptorum, et Sacramentorum cum similibus contineantur. » This last quotation may go to prove that Gerson had already composed tracts for the education of the people. Cfr III, 241-243 : *Against Scruples of Conscience ;* III, 243-246 : *Against the Temptation to Blaspheme ;* II, 486-504 : *On the Difference between Mortal and Venial Sin ;* III, 888-889 : *Advice on the Christian Life ;* III, 589-602 : *On Different Temptations.*

(1) IV, 1-26 : *Exposition and Meditation on the Seven Penitential Psalms ;* III, 695-696 : *Prayer for a Person who has become anxious about his sins.* Cfr also, the prayers and types of meditation to be seen in the *Ad Deum Vadit,* which is a sermon on the Passion of Christ, and in the Discourse of a man with his soul, entitled : *Spiritual Poverty ;* III, 1153-1203 and 487-540.

(2) III, 868-888 : *A dialogue between a Worldly Soul and a Solitary Soul.* The action of the dialogue lasts through a number of days, and the style is lively and vivid, such, in fact, as would become a Drama.

(3) L. Hain, *Repertorium Bibliographicum,* vol. I, part II, pp. 465-476, Paris, 1827; J.-G. Graesse, *Trésor des livres rares et précieux,* tome III, pp. 59-61, and tome VII, p. 327, Berlin, 1922.

because it met the need for the instruction of the people (1). From the presses of the earliest printers this work was sent out into all Europe, and when adventurers set out from Spain for the New World, the *De Arte Moriendi* crossed to America with them, and was one of the first books printed in the Spanish tongue in the city of Mexico (1544) (2).

Another of these remarkable tracts is that which tells of the manner of life of all the faithful (3). One after another Gerson considered the different states of life and indicated the virtues which became each. To read this tract makes one think of the Gospel account of the soldiers and the sinners who went out to be advised by John the Baptist and it was no doubt from that passage that the inspiration came to Gerson. Prelates, nobles, judges and knights were cited for the misuse of authority. The clergy and religious were warned of the necessity of leading holy lives. Rich and poor, parent and child, the merchant, the inn-keeper, the servant, he had a word for all. All of the people were directed to love their clergy and to be zealous in hearing from them the commentary on the Scriptures. All should support their priests by the tithe, be faithful to the attendance at Mass and the Sacraments, and observe the laws of the Church on the keeping of Feast and Fast-Days. They should give generously to the poor, and purge their lives of all detraction, lying, and foul speech. His ideal of what should be the center of devotion is to be seen in his advice to « simple people ». « Let them come to Mass, fasting, and be attentive during the sacrifice. Before Mass they should pray to receive the Grace of God, during Mass they should meditate on the Passion of Christ, and after Mass they should make a good thanksgiving (4). » He was not then

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(1) This was the *Opusculum Tripartitum : de Preceptis Decalogi, de Confessione, de Arte Moriendi.*

(2) *Tripartito del christianiss. y consolatorio doctor Juan Gerson,... Impresso in Mexico : en casa de Juan Cromberger. Por mandudo y a costa del R. S. Obispo de la mesma* (sic) *ciudad Fray Jua Cumaniaga.* Cfr Graesse, o. c., vol. III, p. 59.

(3) II, 538-541, *De modo vivendi omnium Fidelium.*

(4) II, 538. Cfr II, 541 : « Regula ad omnes est ut excommunicatos vitent. Non se inebrient. Pauperes pro posse suo sustineant. Sacerdotes et religiosos et Ecclesiam ubique honorent ; et devote ab eis doctrinam

taken up with the new devotions, but held to the Mass as the central point of all. For the rest, he urged that some system be followed to bring the people to a true appreciation of the truths of religion. In his *Letter on the Reform of Theology*, and again in his *Sermon at Rheims* he demanded that tracts be drawn up containing an exposition of the essentials of Faith so that the people who were neglected by their priests might have some means of instruction (1).

It grieved Gerson to see many, « taken up », as he said, « with vain writings rather than with the true doctrine » (2). As Chancellor, he had to keep alert to detect false doctrines amongst the students, but he was also active to watch over the beliefs of the people. If he condemned a tract of Ruysbroeck, and warned religious against an error latent in a letter wrongly attributed to St. Bernard (3), and if he would point out the false doctrine in the tract entitled the *Tree of Life* (4), by Hubertinus of Casala, he was much more vigilant against the heresies of the Beghards, the Flagellanti, the Waldenses and the Hussites (5).

Against the Beghards he objected that their fervor was misguided. That anyone, mystic or not, could make progress in the spiritual life without the guidance of a spiritual director

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audiant. Festa bene custodiant. Decimas rite solvant. Ab adulatione, a blasphemia, a mendacio, a perjurio, ab assiduo juramento, a turpibus verbis et maxime a luxuriosis verbis se abstineant quia circumstantes et audientes ab eis inflammantur. Missas, Sermones et Confessiones libenter colant. »

(1) I, 124.

(2) III, 1108 : « Major enim mundi pars convertitur ad vanas scripturas, potius quam ad sanctam hanc doctrinam, eo quod pauci sunt recte instituti, et qui sciant quemadmodum teneatur unusquisque in statu suo cognoscere Praecepta Dei et Articula Fidei. »

(3) The Letter : *Ad Fratres de Monte Dei*, was written by Guigues, Prior of the *Grande Chartreuse*, who died in 1188.

(4) I, 113 : « Dum perscrutatus scripta Hubertini relegendo... magis et magis introrsum aspexi, singulaque notavi manifestaverunt se vulpes parvuli, quae demoliuntur vineas maxime dum vinea floruit. » Cfr Fr. Callaey, *Etude sur Ubertin de Casale* (Recueil de Travaux publiés par les membres des conférences d'histoire et de philologie de l'Université de Louvain, fascicule 28), p. 136, Paris, 1911.

(5) I, 20 : « Sunt multi qui se decipi non credunt, alios tamen decipere volunt fingendo mirabilia et illa quae sciunt esse falsa et istorum infinitus est numerus et a me qui loquor frequenter expertus. »

was against the principles of Gerson (1), and the excesses of the Beghards prove the worth of his teaching. All of their failings were due to their pride and self-confidence. They took their own imaginings for revelations, and believed themselves at so perfect a stage that their action became a part of the Divine Action (2). Gerson admitted that many of them were devout, but it was not according to wisdom (3).

Against the Flagellanti, he was more severe in his criticism, and that perhaps because their error was more noticeable. Unfortunately the name of St. Vincent Ferrier was linked with the sect, and he was said to have sustained their movement (4). The friends of the Saint declared that such was not the case, but certainly his preaching aroused a great show of emotion amongst his hearers, many of whom were led to adopt extreme penances (5). Gerson was against anything extreme whether in abnegation or in devotion (6). But what turned him most against the Flagellanti was that they put more trust in their penances than in the Sacraments, and that they were a source of disturbance in the community (7). He wrote therefore to St.Vincent protesting that he did not doubt

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(1) III, 245 : « periculosissima res est cum persona (praesertim illiterata) devotionem habet, si bono caret consiliario, sapienti et experto, et cui omnino confidat in omnibus secretis suis... alias accidit personam illam horribilius errare. » I, 48 : « Ducit eos periculosissimus rector, aut verius impellit propria opinio. »

(2) II, 370; I, 455 ; I, 55 : « passio seu motio, quanto vehementior, tanto precipitatio faciliter invenitur et regi difficilior. Amplius hanc ob causam inter caeteras videntur errasse Begardi et Begardae, ob indiscretam dilectionem nomine devotionis palliatim. Putabat se frui Deo dum vigebat haec passio fortis circa Deum in ejus animo quantumcumque a divinis praeceptis longe esset. »

(3) III, 369 : « Devoti sed non secundum scientiam... spreto aliorum concilio. »

(4) II, 658-659 : *Letter of Gerson to master Vincent of the Order of Preachers.* « Crede mihi, doctor emerite, multi multa loquantur super praedicationes tuas, et maxime super sectam se verberantium. ».

(5) *Acta Sanctorum*, Aprilis, tome I, p. 492, Paris, 1866 ; Pourrat, o. c., vol. II, p. 303.

(6) III, 570; III, 743.

(7) II, 660-664 : *Tractatus contra sectam flagellantium se.* Cfr p. 661 : « Lex Christi nedum ordinat hominem ad Deum sed etiam ad proximum et ad Principem, seu Praelatum suum ; propterea non debet qualiscumque ritum introduci per populos, qui possit causare seditionem, vel partialitatem, vel superstitionem. »

his intention, but urging that he be specific in condemning the movement (1). Another suggestion that he made, although not to the Saint, was that sermons be not such as to arouse outbursts of feeling. If one must preach on the Last Judgment, then let it be in a general way (2).

That Gerson would reprobate the stand of the Waldenses and of the Hussites might readily be concluded from our knowledge of his conservatism (3). Both of these heresies assumed a political importance, and both were subversive of the public order. Against these remnants of the practices and the preaching of the Fraticelli, he was determined in his opposition. Particularly was this true with Hus, who became so tortured by the persistence of Gerson that at the Council of Constance he burst into a tirade against him, to the great astonishment of d'Ailly and Zabarella who in Gerson's favor declared how great was the honor in which he was held through all the world (4). But the Chancellor's activities had antedated the Council. He had written more than once to offer counsel to the Archbishop of Prague as to the manner of dealing with Hus and his followers, and advocated harsh treatment, saying that if the disturbers would not yield, then appeal should be made to the temporal power (5).

To give a full account of the attitude of Gerson towards the heretics we have stepped somewhat ahead of the chronology of this chapter. The study of the action and the influence of the man in the great congress at Constance will be reviewed

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(1) II, 659 : « Quam (i. e. The sect of the Flagellanti) nec approbas, ut testantur noti tui, sed nec efficaciter reprobas. Mittimus querelas aliquorum, quae in manus nostras ne in verbis sed scriptis devenerunt, et id agimus non ad damnationem tuam, non ad inculpationem, non ad irritationem, novit Deus, sed cautelam super his omnibus ampliorem. »

(2) II, 664 : « Proinde si praedicandum fuerit de finali judicio vel Antichristo, fiat hoc in generali, concludendo quod in morte quilibet habet suum judicium proximum et incertum. »

(3) Cfr Chapter VI, pp. 90-92.

(4) Palacky, *Geschichte von Böhmen*, vol. III, part I, pp. 350-351, Prague, 1845. « Auch scheine er ... zu weit zu gehen, da er auch den Pariser Kanzler Gerson für verdächtig halte, einen Mann, der nach dem Urtheil der ganzen Welt über jeden Verdacht erhaben sei. »

(5) *Ibid.*, p. 400 ; Hauck, *o. c.*, vol. V, p. 949, summarizes the correspondence ; Bulaeus, *o. c.*, vol. V, pp. 269-270, gives the text of one of these letters in full.

later on. Here we are concerned with the period of 1402-1413. Another point which might enter here would be the consideration of Gerson's attitude in the presence of the prophecies and the visions that were prevalent, but this is rather a matter which concerns mystical Theology and we leave it for the second part of the present work. It may however be remarked that Gerson was against the cult of the mysterious, and when he was faced with a prophetic utterance of whatever sort he examined first the life and the character of the one prophesying. His views were expressed for the most part in three tracts : *On the Manner of Distinguishing True from False Visions*, *On Proving Spirits*, and *On the Examination of Doctrines*. These were written at three distinct periods of his life and prove the importance which he attached to the problem (1).

There remains to be examined the reaction against the indifference and the irreverence of the people of his day. In 1401, there was commenced at Paris a controversy between John Gerson and Christine de Pisan on the one hand, and John de Montreuil, provost of the city of Lille on the other (2). The last named was a firm admirer of John de Meung, and consequently an ardent defender of his famous poem : *On the Romance of the Rose*, which Gerson and Christine de Pisan condemned as immoral and subversive of good morals. The old conflict, so often repeated when the spirit of *Art for Art's Sake* runs afoul of sober judgment, was entered upon. The *Romance of the Rose* had gained new successes in the

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(1) The tract on the *Distinction of True from False Visions* was written at Bruges (1400-1401) ; the work on *Proving Spirits* dates from the Council of Constance (1415), and contains a condemnation of the teaching of Hus, cfr I, 40 ; the tract on the *Examination of Doctrines* was written at Lyons (1423).

(2) Christine de Pisan (1363-1430) was of Italian ancestry. Her father was astrologer at the Court of Charles V. She married, at an early age, one of the nobles of Picardy, but she was obliged upon his premature death, to provide for herself and her children. She took up the art of writing, under the patronage of the Duke of Burgundy, and composed many interesting works, such as *Le livre des faictz et bonnes mœurs du sage Roi Charles*, and *Le livre de paix*, which is concerned with the manner of educating a prince for honesty rather than for shrewd dealing. O. Cartelliesi, *o. c.*, pp. 106-126.

Fourteenth Century, and its teachings were having a demoralizing effect upon those who read it, and was going far to decrease the respect in which motherhood was held. Christine de Pisan took upon herself the defense of good women, and John Gerson held up, perhaps at her request, and certainly in the interest of public morals the charge against the *Romance of the Rose.*

It appears that the controversy was started quietly enough, when the three principals entered into a verbal discussion on the matter of the condemnation of the poem. Following this John de Montreuil sent a tract, now lost, to Gerson. This started a rapid-fire of letters of which one by Gerson is the most noteworthy of all. In many of the manuscripts in which it exists it is entitled the *Vision of Gerson*, or the *Vision in Allegory* (1). The letter is written in the allegoric style which the *Romance of the Rose* had made so popular, and Conscience first, and then Theology come forward to the attack before the Court of Justice. They both insist upon the evil which is done indirectly by the work, in that it presented vice in an attractive form, and created in the ordinary reader desires and attitudes of thought that were not licit. The worth of the souls that were being destroyed by the reading of the poem was inestimably greater than all the literary worth that could attach to it (2). « If I had in my hands, the only copy of the *Romance of the Rose*, » said Gerson, « and I knew that it had a value of thousands of pounds, I would none the less ruthlessly cast it into the fire » (3). « It is objected, » said he in another place, « that the work should be kept for the good that is in it ; but does not a sword kill just as quickly, even when it is dripping with honey ? Believe me, and not myself alone, but St. Paul, Seneca and experience, that *evil conver-*

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(1) E. Langlois, *Le roman de la Rose*, article in the *Histoire de la Langue et de la Littérature française des Origines à 1900*, published under the direction of L. Petit de Julleville, vol. II, p. 152, Paris, 1896.

(2) III, 297-309. In Mss. fr., n° 1797 (Bibl. Nat.), this treatise is entitled : *Vision allégorique*, in fr., n° 24,856, it is styled : *Le jardin amoureux.*

(3) III, 298-299 : « si esset mihi liber Romancii de Rosa qui esset unicus, et valeret mille pecuniarum libras, comburem eam potius quam venderem ad publicandum eum sicut est. »

sations corrupt good morals. » « Let such a work therefore be condemned (1). »

It is interesting that this tract was written at the time when Gerson was occupied with the reform of Theological teaching, and with the education of the young. It was certainly with a view to protect the young from dangerous doctrines that he withstood what might be called popular opinion, for that the sympathies of the crowd were in favor of retaining the work of John de Meung there can be no doubt.

Two years later, Gerson was again a figure in a controversy which brought out his determination to keep intact the reverence which the people must show to the Church and her ministers. On the 14th of July, 1404, when the members of the University were going in solemn procession to the Church of St. Catherine to pray for peace, a young man in the service of the Duke of Savoisy tried to force his way through the files of clerics, and was cuffed for his boldness (2). He went off in high dudgeon to the hôtel of his master and reported the insult which had thus been given to the arms of Savoisy, and for a reprisal, the troops of the Duke rushed to St. Catherine's and attacked the members of the University as they were hearing Mass. The gravity of this crime astonished all. The irreverence manifested in the defamation of a church demanded an immediate and a severe punishment. The University appealed to the King, but the nobles stood firm against the doctors. Recourse was then had to the Parliament of Paris, and on the 19th of July, 1404, Gerson addressed that body in the name of the University (3). He reviewed the circumstances of the crime, and demanded that justice be done to the malefactors. There had been some talk of leniency. He would not hear of it. « You could not, » he cried, « show greater mercy to the evil-doers that to judge and to correct them in this present life,

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(1) III, 304 : « Si dicatis : in libro hoc multa esse bona; suntne quaeso, propterea mala in eo deleta ? Ignis est periculosior, hamus nocet pisci, si coopertus sit esca. Gladius unctus melle feritne minus ? »

(2) *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. III, pp. 186 ff.; *Journal de Nicholas de Baye*, vol. I, pp. 100-114.

(3) IV, 571-582 : *Complaint in the Name of the University before the Senate of Paris.*

in order to preserve them from a horrible death and damnation in the life to come (1). » « If a sinner does not wish to cure himself by amendment of his misdeeds it is a mercy to force him to do so (2). » After some procrastination, and only because of the repeated protests of the University, and her threat to suspend all classes, did the Parliament take action. On the 2nd of August, sentence was passed upon the Duke. His hôtel, one of the finest in Paris, was completely destroyed, he was bound to pay a goodly sum to the University for those who had been injured, and to establish a foundation for the Church of St. Catherine (3). For four years following, Savoisy was under a ban of the University. But in 1406 at the request of the King, he was permitted to return to the site of his former home (4).

The attitude of Gerson was anything but irreverent. The liberties which people took in the Church on the occasion of Baptisms and Marriages and the laxness connected with the celebration of the New Year and other Feasts of the Church made him join with Clamages in protesting against the further multiplation of holydays that were improperly kept (5). In his directions to the diocesan visitor, it was urged that the response of the people to their duties be observed, that measures be taken to make them attend reverently at Mass and that they be instructed as to the use of the Sacraments (6). The visitor was also directed to exercise a check upon the secular

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(1) IV, 578.

(2) IV, 579 : « Mais paravanture ils diront icy, ou aucuns pour eux, que on leur ferait plus grande grâce, et amour et misericorde, si on leur pardonnait tout le méffait ; je dis que non, car on ne doit mie aimer plus son prouchain, ou son enemi que soy meismes. Il souffit que on l'aime autant que soy, et j'ai monstré que chascun par droit, et par raison, doit vouloir que justice se fasse, quand autrement ne se peut le méffait réparer, comme est icy. »

(3) Denifle-Chatelain, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 129, nos 1805-1807 ; *Journal de Nicholas de Baye*, vol. I, p. 111, says that the decree of the King enforcing this sentence was made public on the day following, « au prouffit de l'Université. »

(4) *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. III, p. 388.

(5) Clamanges, *De Novis Celebritatibus non instituendis*, ed. Lydius, pp. 143-145 ; Gerson, *Opera*, II, 555, 560 : « notetur hic de moderatione, qualiter fieri possit in tot Festis. » III, 472-473.

(6) I, 109 ; I, 442.

authorities to see that they gave proper example, in that they did not try or punish prisoners on Feast Days nor refuse to the condemned permission to confess (1).

To counteract the third evil, that of superstition, which had put in appearance in the lives of the people, Gerson wrote many tracts (2). His condemnation of the students who took up with superstitions and magic has already been reviewed (3). But while his friend d'Ailly was busying himself with the study of Astronomy, he was preoccupied with attacking that science, because, as he said, it led men to the practice of the art of magic (4). The *Trilogium Astrologiae*, a tract composed to warn the Dauphin of the dangers of Astrology, opposed in no uncertain terms those who made profession of Faith and yet practiced according to the doctrines of Averroes spoken of above (5). That the stars could exercice an influence over human action, he denied. The Free-will of God and the free-will of man could not be disputed. The Prince was therefore to suspect all teachings of the astrologers and the magicians. But Charles did not heed the advice offered him, and the evil continued (6).

Similarly with the people, Gerson could object as he would against their superstitious practices and their irreverences, but to no avail as long as he was not in immediate charge of

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(1) II, 561 : « Item si in diebus Festivis exercentur a saecularibus Justitiariis torturae, et quaestiones ad mortem, et si impediuntur ne confiteantur ante mortem, quae omnia fieri non debent. »

(2) I, 203-205 : *Tractatus contra superstitiosam dierum observationem;* I, 220-225 : *Tractatus an liceat Christiano initia rerum observare ex coelestium siderum respectu;* II, 521-523 : *Argumentum contra eos qui dicunt : quod quis, eo die quo Missam audierit, non erit caecus, nec morietur subitanea morte*, etc.

(3) Chapter IV, p. 57.

(4) III, 1299 : « Artes magicae, ad quas Astronomiae et Medicinae maxima pars spectat. »

(5) I, 189-203 : *Trilogium Astrologiae Theologizatae.* « Erraverunt hic multi Astrologi non illuminati per Fidem, qui posuerunt perpetuitatem mundi, eo quod Deus agit immutabiliter, et inde posuerunt animas rationales cum non possunt esse actu infinitae numero, aut migrare de corporibus in corpora,... aut quod unicus esset intellectus in omnibus hominibus, ut Averroes imponit Aristoteli. »

(6) I, 199-200 ; H. B. Schindler, *Die Aberglaube des Mittelalters*, pp. 74, 106-124, Breslau, 1858. Schindler indicates many means of recourse to magic had in the Fifteenth Century.

them. His work was, thus, to write for the benefit of Bishops and pastors to remind them of their care for the people and to suggest means of meeting their duty. In all that he wrote to that end he held to the theory that it was chiefly necessary to instruct the people since it was through ignorance that they erred. He demanded however that care be used in preaching against vain observance lest in losing their false practices the people be deprived of all sense of devotion (1). What he advised was that just as the Church in the early days turned the thoughts of the pagans from their gods to the Saints, and substituted Christian festival for pagan festival, so in the matter of superstition should the Church try to change the object of the belief (2). One instance of his own practice may be drawn from his having preached on devotion to the Angels (3). This was perhaps his way to turn men from their fear of evil spirits, and also from their belief in the control which the stars had over their destiny.

In the year 1403, after he had pleased Pope Benedict with a sermon at Marseilles, Gerson obtained the expectancy of one of the finest parishes in Paris, that of St. Jean en Grève (4). The parish was in the heart of the business district of Paris and was made up for the most part of merchants and nobles (5). But the disposition of the pastorate of that parish was in the hands of the Abbot of Bec, and no sooner was the news given out that it was intended to link that post with the posi-

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(1) III, 468-479 : *Tractatus Consolatorius de Directione seu Rectificatione Cordis.*

(2) III, 473.

(3) III, 888-889 ; III, 1468-1491 : *Sermon and Collation on the Angels.*

(4) N. Valois, *Gerson curé de St-Jean en Greve*, pp. 1-11, Paris, 1901.

(5) Lebœuf, *Histoire de la ville et de tout le diocèse de Paris*, edited by H. Cocheris, vol. I, pp. 318 ff., gives the history of the Church of St. Jean en Grève, and the districts that it contained, cfr p. 330. Valois, *o. c.*, quotes from a document in the National Archives at Paris, to show the attitude of the parishioners to the proposed change : « c'est comme chose incompatible que un chascun Chancelier peust a toujours gouverner y celle église de St-Jehan avec la charge de la dicte Chancelerie,... et que la dicte union et annexion porroit estre en grant escaude et desplaisit en moult grant partie des paroissiens d'icelle église qui sont en moult grant nombre, et dont plusiers sont moult grant seigneurs, conseillers, officiers et grans et puissans bourgois. »

tion of Chancellor than Willaim d'Anvillers who was at the head of the monastery of Bec, made a protest against this incursion upon his rights; and since Benedict XIII had meantime changed his mind because of Gerson's address at Tarascon on New Year's Day 1404, Gerson was forbidden under pain of excommunication to dare to unite the two offices (1).

In the year 1408 when the man actually in charge of the parish had died, Gerson again raised the question, however, and received the appointment, once more, from Pope Benedict XIII. But the Abbot of Bec set forth his claims anew and named John of Boissy for the place (2). Only after the dispute had been carried to Parliament, and an accord reached between Gerson and the Abbot was he allowed to enter upon his duties. John of Boissy was appointed Bishop of Bayeux and so left the way clear (3). To assure his tenure, he obtained, at a later date, from John XXIII, the successor of Alexander V, a confirmation of the appointment as well as a permission to absolve from all cases except those distinctly reserved to the Pope in person (4). So that from the year 1408, Gerson had parochial duties added to those of his office at the University and was able to come into first-hand acquaintance with the needs of the people.

The parish of St. Jean en Grève, since it was made up of the wealthy noble and the merchant class, must have presented difficulty enough to Gerson at the start of his career as pastor. There on the Place de Grève his ears must often have been shocked by the language of the rude hawkers, as they peddled their wares. There too, he saw the evil effect of lax morals on the children of his parish. He did not lose heart however, but set about patiently to remedy conditions. Since he held that it was through ignorance, and for want or proper instruction that the people went astray (5), he began quietly in

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(1) Valois, o. c., p. 4

(2) *Ibid.*

(3) Denifle-Chatelain, o. c., vol. IV, p. 126; *Gallia Christiana* dates the Bishopric of Boissy, Nov. 26, 1408.

(4) On July 24, 1410, John XXIII confirmed Gerson's appointment to St. Jean, and also his possession of the Deanery in Bruges. He was to lose the latter in 1411, however. Cfr *Gallia Christiana*, vol. V, p. 258, Paris, 1781.

(5) I, 442. To remedy this, he drew up his many tracts on the Commandments and the manner of receiving the Sacraments.

the form of tract and sermon to supply their need. In both he was careful to adjust his lessons to the mentality of the reader or the auditor, to try to root self-love out of their lives and bring them to sacrifice their will to the Will and Commands of God (1). If we may judge from a recommendation which he made to other men having the care of souls, it would seem that he had placards made to hang in his church, upon which were written in terse form the truths he wanted to impress upon the people (2). The lessons that he taught his parishioners may better be summed up in the next chapter when we come to the discussion of the preaching of Gerson. Here however it would be of advantage to indicate the spirit of his message and the method that he used to point it out. Preaching was the ordinary avenue for instructing the people, and for that ministry he was well prepared. In his sermons he was to aim at showing his people the evil of the day and to try to help them overcome it.

There is amongst the printed works of Gerson a very small excerpt that may be said to summarize briefly the Gospel that he taught his parishioners (3). It is a summons to them to respond to God's Love for them. « To love God above all things according to His Command ; to have the good-will and strong affection to follow the Commandments, and to put out of one's life everything that is contrary to the Will of God. In all that is done, whether it be eating, or working, or sleeping, or praying... to have a thought of God and to direct all to His

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(1) III, 888-889.

(2) I, 427 : « Hi namque sumptibus suis et diligentis, per hujus aut similis doctrinae publicationem debent aliorum correctionem procurare ; hoc enim agere poenitentia quaedam, hoc satisfactio, hoc opus misericordiae Dei acceptius quam eleemosyna corporalis. Agant igitur praenominati quod doctrina hujus Libri inscribatur, tabellis assignatur tota vel per partes in locis communibus, utpote in Parochialibus Ecclesiis, in Scholis, in Hospitalibus, in locis religiosis. » Cfr E. Vansteenberghe, *Le cardinal Nicolas de Cues* (1401-1464), p. 102, Paris, 1920 : « L'ignorance générale restait incroyablement profonde. Nicolas de Cues prit l'initiative de faire peindre, sur un grand tableau de bois, le Pater, l'Ave, le Credo et les Dix Commandements de Dieu, et il les fit suspendre en bonne place, dans l'église de Saint-Lambert d'Hildesheim. L'idée était pratique ; ... mais elle n'était pas absolument neuve : l'honneur en revient à l'admirable pédagogue que fut notre grand Gerson. »

(3) III, 888-889 : *Pour la conduite chrétienne.*

service. Every evening one should take time for thought and reflect what he has done, to demand pardon of God for the evil and thank Him for the good that has been accomplished. Thus doing he will sleep calmly in the Arms of God, and of his Guardian Angel » (1).

Another feature of his work that we may be sure was continued, was that of looking to the moral training of the young. Not alone did he sustain the effort to educate the young to their christian duties, but he tried to start an influence over the early lives of children, by winning the co-operation of mothers. This action of his is reflected in a sermon which he preached before the University in which he urged the men who had to preach to the people to exhort mothers to « train their children to the love and practice of their religion » (2). In another place he blesses those parents who keep their children living in the presence of God (3). So convinced was he of the need to protect the youth of the day that at the Synod of Rheims, he demanded that action be taken in every parish to look after the instruction and moral training of the young (4).

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(1) III, 888 ; cfr also III, 461-462, where Gerson tells how people can be made to love God. He would develop the theme of God's Fatherhood, of His Love for His creatures, and of the constant testimonials of that Love shown in the favors man has received. If one were to say to a young boy : « You have in a far distant region a father who is most wise, most powerful and most good, and it is he who sends you all that you have that is good, — your clothing and your food, — should you not then love him and do what he asks of you ? » A boy would say : « Long live such a father. » « Bene sit semper isti Patri, qui certe mihi est valde diligendus, honorandus, reverendus et prae oculis jugiter habendus. » Gerson comments thus : « Existimo quod simili manuductione poterit Christianus, etiam quivis rudis et literarum ignarus induci, ut transeat in affectum cordis erga Dominum Deum suum. »

(2) III, 1426 : « Sumo doctrinam moralem, quod Praedicatores ad populum maxime debent admonere matres, ut liberos suos a puero per se nutriant et instituant ad Religionis amorem et cultum ; quoniam temporibus nostris horribile est defectus in regimine infantium et puerorum. »

(3) III, 463.

(4) II, 548 : « Sit etiam in qualibet Parochia cura specialis juxta canones, de instructione parvulorum, praesertim in morum disciplina secundum primitiva nostrae Religionis rudimenta. » Cfr II, 560, The visitor was to inquire : « qualiter instruuntur pueri in Parochia » ; II, 561 : « igitur provideatur quod sint Scholae ubi non sint. »

In no way may it be said that Gerson was pessimistic in his dealings with the parishioners of St. Jean en Grève. He cries out against the mentality and the failings of the day, he is absolute in his condemnation of evil, but for the people he has never a harsh word. He tries to rule by kindness. His instruction is calm, and he teaches as much by indirect as by direct method. One of the great points in his lessons, as in his devotion, was the importance that he attached to the belief in the Communion of Saints. The advantage of the lives of the Saints as a source of example was clearly seen by him, and he took great pains to sketch their virtues, and to insist that no matter how exalted they were, they could be imitated. « Do not say to me that we cannot be like St. Peter and St. Paul, » he exclaimed. « We are men as they were, and the love of God can do with us what it did with them (1). » And in another place, he says : « Would that God would help me so to speak to you of the virtues of St. Antony, that we might all be moved to devotion » (2). This, then, was one of the great means that he used to keep the people alert to their spiritual betterment.

A corollary to this teaching was his insistence upon the value of self-scrutiny and self-knowledge. No man can be called learned who does not know himself. « To know one's self is to know one's Theology (3). » In his lifetime, perhaps more than in any other period of years known in history, the sad realities of life were present to the people. The Chroniclers of France for the latter half of the Fourteenth Century record calamity after calamity. Death seemed to have been near at hand always. To show that the people were familiar with the thought of death we have only to instance the sculpturing and the painting of the Dance of Death, which some believe was inspired by a real

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(1) III, 1417 : « Nec oportet ut dicant mihi aliqui : nequaquam tales esse possumus sicut sanctus Petrus et sanctus Paulus : profecto aeque bene capere possumus hanc amorem ad nos ». Cfr 1405 : « Ego vero non video quidquam in sancto Petro tanta laude dignum, sicut Fidem ejus, et suum erga Deum amorem. »

(2) III, 1394 : *Third Sermon on St. Antony*. Cfr III, 1384-1394 : *Second Sermon on St. Antony*.

(3) III, 1384 : « Qui seipsum cognoscit, vitamque suam omnem, is novit Theologiam. »

dance called by that name. Gerson would not permit his fellow men to grow callous to the thought of death. Throughout his writings and his preaching this thought may be said to prevail. The balance by which he tried everything was the thought of death. After the fashion of his time he wrote a treatise which bore the title : *The Mirror of a good Life* (1). This was nothing other than a meditation on death, in which he tried to bring his readers to order their lives that they would not have to fear death. « If », said he, in part, « those who lead evil lives could but once be brought to think of the end to which they are tending, they would be fear-struck and would commence to love God, leaving aside the vanity of worldly things » (2).

To keep his congregation in the Way of Life, Gerson was not one to make innovations. He was against much that was popular in the way of devotion, and spent his effort to keep men faithful to the essentials. His devotion centered about the altar. He was amongst the few men of his time to agitate in favor of frequent and integral confession (3). For the sake of the people he did what he could to keep priests devout and faithful to their Mass (4). In the same purpose, because the lives of some of the priests were so much in contradiction to the Gospel they preached that people would not be ministered to by them, he set out for the reform of clergy and religious. With him all seemed to verge towards the same end,— to make the people respond to the means of Grace placed at their disposition in the Sacraments of the Church. Fear lest the new devotions would lead to abuse made him protest against them (5). But that he was not blind to the good that might

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(1) Mss. fr. 990, fol. 226-235 (Bibl. Nat.), *Miroir de bonne vie.*

(2) *Ibid.*, fol. 231 recto.

(3) III, 841 : « mettés painne de vous confesser, souvent, comme chascune semaine, ou chascune grant Feste ; car confession est une chose qui moult plaist à Dieu, ... et recevés selond vostre dévocion le vray pain Divin qui nourrit l'âme. » Cfr Pourrat, o. c., vol. II, pp. 494-495.

(4) III, 323-334, *De Praeparatione ad Missam.*

(5) III, 476. Gerson urges the Bishops to be rather against than in favor of some of the devotions, but they must be tactful : « tum propter pronitatem hominum ad superstitiones. Tum quia satis suppetunt exempla pietatis, Fidei, et Religionis Christianae in sacris Scripturis, et historiis authenticis, sine multiplicatione hujusmodi novorum superfluorum, quae nec solidum satis habent fundamentum. »

come from a judicious use of special devotions we have not far to go to see. In his own prayer he was accustomed to appeal to all the Saints, but especially to the Blessed Mother. One of the features of his sermons was that he invariably said a Hail Mary before beginning the development of his argument (1). Since the year 1400, at least, he was busy trying to build up a devotion to St. Joseph, because of the powerful influence the thought of the Holy Family would have upon the lives of the people (2). St. Joseph had long enjoyed honor in the Eastern Church, but in the West, apart from private devotion such as that of St. Bernard, St. Thomas of Aquin, and St. Gertrude (1310), and from the cult observed by members of the Carmelites and Franciscans, the devotion had not taken (3). In 1413, Gerson was to make an appeal to the churches urging that a Feast in honor of the Espousal of Joseph with Mary be instituted (4). At the same time he sent a letter to the Duke of Berry asking that he use his influence for the institution of such a Feast in Notre Dame (5). Similarly, at the Council of Constance he introduced the subject in one of his discourses (6). But his agitation was not to meet success in his own lifetime, for not until the time of Sixtus IV (1471-1484) was a day set aside in the Calendar of the Church for the veneration of St. Joseph.

Gerson had the heart of a pastor. His interest went out to the people in all their wants. He was hopeful for their betterment, and he tried to lead them by kindness and not by berating them. For the sick in the Hôpital de Dieu, he had the greatest sympathy. In fact he seems to have had the direction

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(1) St. Vincent Ferrier had this same habit. Cfr L. Masson, *Jean Gerson*, pp. 195-200, Lyons, 1894. Masson tries vainly to assign to Gerson all the glory for commencing this practice.

(2) III, 842-868 : *Considérations sur St. Joseph ;* cfr *Le développement du culte de S. Joseph*, article in the *Revue Bénédictine*, vol. XIV, pp. 145-158, 1897. Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. II, pp. 499-500.

(3) C.-L. Souvay, *Saint Joseph*, article in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. VIII, pp. 504-506.

(4) IV, 732-736 : « Ecclesiis universis, ... volens diem in honorem Virginis ejusdem et justi Joseph sponsi sui, testis et custodis sui celebriter venerari. »

(5) IV, 729-731.

(6) III, 1345-1359. Sermon preached on Sept. 8th, 1416.

of the hospital at some time or other, for he made a stirring appeal before Charles VI for funds to maintain the work of the religious in charge of the place (1). Often and again, Gerson appeared before the Court to appeal for the people against the taxes that were oppressing them. One of the most striking, and certainly characteristic defences is that made in 1405, wherein he described the lot of the poor man, how the taxes drained him of resources and the foragers pillaged him until he had neither food nor shelter (2). In 1413, under stress of necessity to collect an army to drive out the English, it was decided to raise a special tax in Paris (3). All of the principal bourgeois, and the professors of the University were to be obliged to pay according to their means. But from such tariffs the University had claimed exemption (4) and Gerson refused to pay. So great was the indignation of the collectors that they would no doubt have done him harm could they have found him, but he fled from his house into the Cathedral of Notre Dame, and hid away amongst the rafters until danger was past (5). That

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(1) IV, 681-684. Gerson described the manner of life and the privations undergone by the religious having the care of the sick and infirm; in 1408, at Rheims, he could recommend that the regime of the Hôtel Dieu at Paris be followed generally.

(2) IV, 609 : *Sermon entitled Long Live the King :* « Heu miser aliquis homo, si etiam satisfecerit taxae suae, suae impositioni, suae quarto semper solvendae Anni exactioni, calcaribus Regiis, cincturae Reginae ... parum illi remanebit : nihilominus restat adhuc alia exactio. Venient satellites arripientes ollas et patellas ; miser homo nihil habebit ad manducandum ... misella uxor audiet quattuor aut quinque parvos pueros apud furnum, si furnus adsit calidus, qui quaerent panem, clamabunt ut rabidi prae fame. Venient raptores, omniaque quae invenient rapient, fortassis unam gallinam, aut quattuor pullos ejus, quae egena uxor nutriat vendenda, ut reliquum exactionis posset persolvere... omnia capientur et absumentur... Quid vobis videtur, potestne pejus bono illi homini contingere ? » Cfr Funck-Brentano, *o. c.*, p. 466.

(3) *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. V, p. 62.

(4) *Ibid.*, vol. III, pp. 352-388, tells of a struggle between the University and the King in 1405-1406 on the matter of taxes.

(5) The chronicler says : « taxum impositum solvere recusabat, mox prope vesano impetu domum suum adeuntes omnem ejus substantiam... abstulerunt de facto... In multos quoque alios de gremio Universitatis existentes perpetrassent similia vel pejora. » Cfr Denifle-Chatelain, o. c., vol. IV, p. 367, n° 2135 : Charles VI moved by the constant complaints of the University freed « scholares et supposita » from « quorumcumque impositarum. »

one who was throughout so ardent a patriot would refuse to aid in the gathering together of money for an army would seem strange were we not aware that like most other public moneys little would reach the end intended. Gerson's refusal was made surely because of the principle whereby scholars should have been exempt. But it was also a form of protest against the levy of exorbitant taxes from which the people were suffering.

At the Court of France where he was often called to preach in some official capacity, Gerson carried a challenge to the indifference that was displayed to the interests of religion and the loose conduct of the retainers there. His accusations were not made directly, as a rule, but he tried by heightening the picture of good government to effect a reform that was necessary. He did not like Jacques Lagrand bring the discussion of the evil lives of the courtiers into the pulpit, nor as the commoners were to do in the course of their rioting in 1413 did he expose verbatim the degradations to which the dependents of the Queen and Princes had descended. But he tried to set an ideal before them all, to touch the consciences of the lords and to elevate their ambitions. He cited the great names and reputations of past monarchs, and built upon every theme that would stimulate the sensibilities of a royalty that was proud of its traditions (1). In a sermon before the King in 1391, he declared that without « true religion, without subjection to God no man was worthy of the title of King » (2). In this same address, made the year before Charles was struck with insanity, Gerson dwelt upon the duties of the King to the three realms over which he had an influence, and his obligation to himself, his Kingdom and the Church to govern well (3). He insisted upon the duty that developed for the advisers of the King to see to it that power was justly exer-

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(1) III, 1250 : « et tu nobilissime et excellentissime princeps, diligentiam adhibe, ut nobilem praedecessorum laudem, qua Christianissimi vocantur, non patiaris in te desinere, vel ulla ex parte diminui. » III, 989 : « Insequendo exemplum gloriosorum Regum Franciae, praecipue Caroli Magni et sancti Ludovici. » Cfr III, 1121.

(2) III, 980.

(3) III, 980-994.

cised (1). Upon yet another occasion he drew a picture of the benefits that would derive if the realm were wisely governed. Then there would be no misuse of public funds, nor soldiers despoiling the people, nor offices sold to the highest bidder (2). He may have refused the position of confessor and chaplain to the King, but he did not turn away from the obligation of correcting him. Charles VI however was quite irresponsible, and at the mercy of his relatives, who wanted nothing more than to share in the governing of the Kingdom. Under their mismanagement, the Kingdom fell lower and lower into despondency, and with unsettlement and dissatisfaction preying upon the people the work of reforming them became more difficult still. Withal, Gerson did not lose heart, but continued, throughout the time of his pastorate, by his example and by his preaching, the task to which he had set his hand.

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(1) IV, 622-625 : *Ten Considerations most Useful to Princes lest they be Deceived by the Advice of Flatterers.* Cfr IV, 594 : « mendax adulatio. »

(2) III, 1253.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PREACHING OF GERSON

A judgment not infrequently passed upon the century immediately preceding the Protestant Reformation is that it was a time when little or no heed was paid to the preaching ministry. This conclusion is based, as a rule, on a comparison between the bulk of sermons edited in the Sixteenth Century and the rather sparing collection that has come down from the Fifteenth, or late Fourteenth Centuries (1). The reason for the disparity is not far to seek, however; for, first, we must allow for the demand to which the invention of the art of printing gave rise, and which was supplied by the editing of new as much as of old texts. The controversial character of the sermons that were preached in the Sixteenth Century made a sharp contrast with the calm of the preaching of the Fifteenth Century. Within the Church and outside, pulpit oratory consisted, during the time of the Reformation, in appeals to the passions of the auditors. The congregations were instructed more, perhaps, as to the failings of the opposing party than as to the virtues of their own; and the feelings that ran so high that they caused Wars of Religion in most of the countries were most often roused by the spoken word.

The spirit of the Fifteenth Century was quite in contrast to this. Let it be granted from the start that there were many preachers who neglected their duty, although it was the chief means at hand for the religious education of the people. Let it be admitted, also, that there were some who abused their office and preached fable instead of doctrine to their congre-

(1) L. Dacheux, in the *Revue catholique d'Alsace*, 1863, pp. 1-9, 58-65, indicates the men who were known as orators, and the collections of sermons that were used in the Valley of the Rhine on the Eve of the Reformation. Cfr also Imbart de la Tour, *Le mouvement réformiste dans le Catholicisme avant Luther*, article in the *Correspondant*, July 1908.

gations, striving to please rather than to persuade. But the neglect of some may not be taken to indicate the indifference of all to the work of preaching (1). If no great volume of sermons has come down to us, it is because men were not so much concerned with the quest of new things, but sought to express the old truths well. Books of sermons were plentiful. They were those of men such at Sts. Augustin, Gregory, Bernard, Thomas of Aquin and Bonaventure, and from them were taken the themes and the doctrinal ideas that were developed in sermons for the people. Other works that were in demand were the *Books of Examples* (2) and the *Legends of the Saints* (3). These served for the clergy as a sort of spiritual armory, out of which they drew the orthodox exposition of the truths of Faith and the anecdote with which to enliven their narrative. Some of the religious, such as Sts. Vincent Ferrier and Bernadine of Siena formed an exception to this custom. Their preaching was much less impersonal since they had as a specific end the correction of the morals of the people (4). These men worked upon the feelings of their hearers more perhaps than upon their intellects, and brought out a resolve that led to reform movements in Spain, France, Italy and Germany. Preaching such as theirs was not, however, the ideal commonly entertained. The appeal of scholasticism had been more to the head than to the heart, and with few excep-

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(1) II, 545 : « nonne multiplicatio fit sermonum tanta, quod in nauseam transit audientium ? » Gerson urged therefore a limitation in the number of those licensed to preach.

(2) These *Books of Examples* consisted of anecdotes arranged with the object of supplying preachers with apt stories by which they could clinch the lessons that they gave to the people in their sermons. The publication of these *Exempla* has been numerous of recent years. One of the most interesting of the collections is edited by Al. Masseron, *Les « Exemples » d'un ermite siennois*, Paris, 1924.

(3) Cfr Gerson, *Opera*, II, 102 : « (vulgus) ab ore sacerdotum oportet legem exquirere, neque tamen arcendi videntur ab opusculis moralibus et devotis, nullam in se difficultatem nec ambiguitatem nec absurditatem in translationibus gerentibus, cujusmodi sunt historiae vel vitae vel legendae sanctorum. »

(4) *Le prediche Volgari di San Bernardino di Siena*, Ed. by Luciano Banchi, Siena, 1880-1883 ; R. Hefele, *Der heiliger Bernhardin von Siena und die Franziskanische Wanderpredigt in Italien während des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Freiburg in Breisgau, 192 ; O. Fages, *Histoire de S. Vincent Ferrier*, Louvain, 1901.

tions the men who went out from the Universities followed in their preaching the method that was used in the lecture-hall.

At the University of Paris, attention was given to the training of young men for the work of preaching. Each student as he progressed towards the attainment of his Degree in Sacred Theology had to apply the lessons that he learned by preaching occasionally in the Churches and Convents (1). Gerson himself went through this schooling (2). Properly responded to, it was an excellent means to the assimilation of doctrines and to the growth of interest in the work done by the student. But too often the result was not equal to expectations, and the sermons instead of being adapted to the hearers became a vain show of learning (3). We may see in one of Gerson's earliest efforts, — that made in the year 1388 before the student-body of the College of Navarre, — some of the mannerisms that his comrades affected in the pulpit (4). Gerson's address abounded with quotations from the classics, and amongst the examples of « generous youth » that he cited to excite the emulation of his hearers, the names of Plato, Cato, Cyrus, Alexander and Alcibiades were placed alongside of those of Samuel, David, John and Nicholas (5). Yet, although he clothed his speech in the language and style of the ancients, Gerson was Christian in his thought. Whether his comrades held to the same standard would be difficult to say, but it is certain that, if they continued to preach everywhere in such style, their sermons would be quite beyond the grasp of most of their hearers.

Surely, during the sixteen years which marked the exile of the Dominican Order from the University, the Parisians heard

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(1) Thurot, o. c., p. 149 ; Schwab, o. c., p. 76.

(2) III, 1468-1480 : *Sermo de Angelis*, and III, 1123-1134 : *Sermo de Humilitate*. Both were given while Gerson was a student of theology. Other sermons were delivered at Court during the same period, III, 980-994.

(3) IV, 216-217.

(4) III, 1021-1030 : *Sermon on Septuagesima Sunday*.

(5) III, 1024 : « Mens erat mea generosorum adolescentium exempla, ut Platonis, Catonis, Cyri, Alexandri, Alcibiadii ; Sanctissimorum praeterea, ut Samuelis, David, Joannis, Nicolai, ac similium quorum ingens est multitudo. »

some remarkable sermons from the students who were called upon to substitute for the religious (1). Filled with the system of the class-room, the young orators found it beyond their powers to limit their talk to the simple exposition of doctrines, or to homilies on the Gospel (2). Subtle distinctions were the things they sought ; sermons that catered to the discussion of curious topics were the ones favored. Thus the themes of the General Judgment and of Antichrist were generally used, not alone for the effect that it was calculated they should have, but also because of the chance given to introduce all manner of speculation. Such problems were posed as : « When will the Day of Judgment come ? Will the Antichrist be a man, or a devil in human form ? Will the fire that destroys the world be like the fire that we see about us ? Will the damned see Christ ? Will the trumpets of the Angels be real ? Where will the Judgment be held ? Will the Apostles be seated in Judgment ? Will all heavenly movement cease with the Judgment ? » These are some of the thoughts that Gerson himself suggested to the people of St. Jean en Grève in 1403, but which he hastened to assure them, « do not concern the people, nor for that matter the majority of the Theologians. These things are to be as God ordains, and we know only what it may please Him to reveal to us (3). » Gerson expressed, more than once, regret for the mentality of the scholars and for their preaching. They were preaching not with the idea of teaching, but to display their learning (4). Full of the sophisms that they had adopted in the schools, they neglected to adapt their teaching to the capacity of their congregations, and turned to the discussion of Logic, Metaphysics or even Mathematics (5). « Not a few of the

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(1) Denifle-Chatelain, o. c., vol. III, pp. 486-515, nos 1557-1583.

(2) III, 1142 : Gerson insists on the worth of homilies on the Gospel. « Hic enim modus praedicationis quamquam a modernis parum tritus sit, efficacior forsan est ad Fidei robur stabiliendum. »

(3) III, 912-913.

(4) II, 534, 545 ; I, 106. Gerson's practice is seen in III, 1063, as follows : « ad concipiendum sensum Evangelii principaliter ad nostram instructionem non intrando quaestiones altas, vel nimium curiosas et alias quam vos deceant ».

(5) IV, 217 : « Denique cur ob aliud appellantur Theologi nostri temporis sophisti et verbosi, immo et phantastici, nisi quia relectis utilibus intelligibilibus pro auditorum qualitate, transferunt se ad nudam logi-

preachers, » said he, « think that sermons are to be made for the purpose of instructing people on matters of which they are ignorant, but it is a mistake to do so. Sermons must not be given solely with the view of indicating what is good, but the heart and the affections must be moved to love and desire the good (1). » In his own sermons Gerson offered a model that should have been followed. He had, with the rest of the men of his day an affection for the classics ; often enough he quoted them in his preaching ; but it was when he spoke before the intellectuals, and, in contrast with the practice of his confreres, he had invariably a moral lesson that he drove home. He never spoke simply to entertain his audience.

Another fault that weakened not a little the force of preaching was the tendency to show one's self to best advantage in the pulpit. It is a fact that benefices were often won by students who carried themselves well in public discussion (2). No doubt the same applied to sermons. At all events, so conscious was the attempt made by some to please their hearers that they sometimes descended to the level of buffoonery (3). There were those who would not preach if they thought they would not be praised for their effort. « Such, » said Gerson, « are moved, not by charity, but by vanity » (4). Still others took a more sordid attitude and measured their success in the pulpit by the amount of money returned to them. There is no doubt that many of the lower clergy had to beg their living from their parishioners in this way, for the tithes that were

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cam, vel Metaphysicam, aut etiam Mathematicam, ubi et quando non oportet... ad subversionem magis audientium, vel irrisionem quam rectam Fidei aedificationem saepe proficiunt. »

(1) III, 1111 : « Nonnulli opinantur sermones dumtaxat fieri ad addiscendum et sciendum quod prius ignorabatur. Tales homines falluntur. Sermones enim non fiunt ut addiscatur bonum ; sed ad movendum cor et affectionem ut amet, et desideret et compleat quod bonum est. »

(2) Schwab, o. c., pp. 70-71.

(3) A. Piaget, *Sermonnaires et traducteurs*, article in *Histoire de la Langue et de la Littérature Française au Moyen Age*, vol. II, Chapter V, pp. 245-246.

(4) I, 160 : « Praedicare vel quidquid aliud laudabiliter facere, dum arridet favor et plausus, et dum super alios collaudatur operans ; si cessantibus istis cessat et ipse ab actione : impellebat quippe eum non charitas sed vanitas. »

due them were not always paid, and in few instances were they sufficient to meet the needs of the priests (1). Money values had changed constantly during the reign of Charles VI, and the cost of living had more than doubled (2). So that life became difficult for the priest who could not under pain of suspension take up with commerce as a means of livelihood. It was a pity that the Benefice-System permitted such an unjust distribution of the wealth of the Church that the men upon whom devolved the immediate care of the people had so miserable an existence.

For those preachers who spent their time and energy seeking the adulation of their hearers, Gerson had nothing less than contempt. With some the preaching had, he said, « become so mixed with fable as to become a joke ». But when men were led astray by what they heard said, lightly enough, in sermons the thing became intolerable. « It is true that the people are more generous in their applause of a story-teller than in their response to those who preach the truth. But the true preacher does not seek to be praised ; he aims to help the people make progress ; with him there must be no question of amusing his hearers, but of teaching them what is necessary for salvation (3). » For those priests who were living in squalor, Gerson showed sympathy. He did all he could to help better their condition, and amongst the advices that he gave in his addresses before the Provincial Councils that he attended there was one to the effect that those who had the care of the

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(1) III, 551. One of the directions that Gerson gives to the diocesan visitor is that he inquire if the parishioners pay their tithe faithfully, II, 560. Cfr II, 534 : « Status curatorum habet jus et titulum recipiendi decimas... pro sustentatione sufficienti status sui. »

(2) Poete, o. c., p. 554 ff.; A. Blanchet and A. Dieudonné, *Manuel de numismatique*, vol. II, *Monnaies royales françaises depuis Hugues Capet jusqu'à la Révolution*, pp. 270-271, Paris, 1916.

(3) II, 522 : « Deinceps per praedicationem qualis dicta est, populus qui est pronissimus ad suggestiones, curiositates et sortilegia credenda redditur proclivior ; dum talia palam accipit in sermonibus, in quibus Fides recta solide et nude praedicanda foret, et in ea populus nutriendus plus quam in fabulis anilibus. Eas itaque avidius audient et relatoribus applaudent longe magis quam praedicantibus veritatem... sed praedicator non applausum suum quaeret, sed populi profectum : nec attendit quid delectet inutiliter, sed quid proficiat salubriter. »

Cy commence la passion de nostre sauueur ihesucrist moult
solempnelle / prononcee a paris / en lostel sainct bernart
apres disner / par venerable & excellent docteur en theologie
maistre Jehan Jarson / Chancellier de nostre dame de paris /

Deum laudi. Commencons on nous
nasmes au matin . Cest que ihesucrist vray
seigneur et redempteur yssy hors de lostel py-
latte portant sa croix . helas deuot peuple
crestien cest acertes maintenant . Jay sen-
a mort amere / ihesus veant sa doulce mere
sa deuone bien par pensance de ce dueil auoir remembrance /
Odieu quelle iniquite quelle incomparable ennaulte gayonces
ouy dire que vng homme condempne tant fust pecheur abhomina-
ble fust constraint a porter son gibet ou sa croix Mais ce fut cy
acomplissant la propheee de ysaie . que ihesus porte son triumphe
imperial sur ses espaules . Et me soit pardonne se ie vous supplie
se ie ne mareste descripre lindignite de ce fait Jay la pensee
Car ie ny pourroye actaindre . Maintenant peult bien Sire

GERSON PREACHES TO THE PEOPLE

(A page from ms. 230, Valenciennes, ca. 1425.)

young in the schools, and those who had to preach to the people be properly supported, so that they could give all their time to cultivate a spirit of piety amongst the people (1).

In these Synods he attacked another misuse that was common in the pulpit. Many orators had gained the attention and the response of an audience by turning the tide of their invective against those in the seats of authority (2). Such outbursts won the sympathy of the people, and helped not a little to exaggerate their unrest. In their excitement against misrule, and their resentment against over-taxation the bourgeois of Paris were wont to oppose the action of the Court and especially that of the Duke of Orleans (3). Paris of the early Fifteenth Century was in a constant turmoil, and criticism of those who were held to be the cause of all the troubles of the nation was quite open. Worse than that, the people were well aware of the scandalous lives of those at Court, and if some men had the courage to face the Princes and recite before them the list of their crimes, we can be sure that the discussion was much more severe in the absence of the principals concerned. Another topic that was roundly discussed in the pulpits, was the manner of dress of women (4). Some of the

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(1) II, 551 : « Convenit occurrere... mendicitati curatorum in locis plurimis, ... quibus nulla ob egestatem suam reverentia... » II, 549 : « Quamobrem fiat, sicut praetactum est, provisio sufficiens aliqua pro magistris, fiat pro praedicatoribus idoneis, si sint saeculares, de praebendis, si Mendicantes aliunde per Praelatos et curatos, quatenus magis ad pietatem quam ad quaestum suam valeant praedicationem ordinare. »

(2) III, 944 : « Nonnulli minime reputarent hominem aliquem bonum praedicatorem et virilem, nisi Principum reprehenderet vitia. »

(3) Poete, *o. c.*, p. 545 ff. ; Coville, *o. c.*, pp. 90-91. In 1410 many people left Paris to escape the taxes and the hardship that bound them down.

(4) Poete, *o. c.*, pp. 514-515, quotes from one of the tirades that were leveled against the fashions of the day in this wise : « si bien équipée, de la tête aux pieds, qu'elle respire tout entière le feu du démon. Regardez sa chaussure est si étroite qu'elle en est ridicule. Regardez sa taille, c'est pis encore. Elle serre ses entrailles avec une ceinture de soie, d'or, d'argent... Levez les yeux vers sa tête : c'est là que se voient les insignes de l'enfer. Ce sont des cornes, des cheveux morts... Elle a plus de queues que n'en a Satan, car celui-ci n'en a qu'une, tandis que cette femme en a tout autour d'elle. » Cfr Dufourcq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, pp. 196-197, gives a brief quotation from a sermon by St. Ber-

preachers went so far as to blame the women for all of the evil manifest in the world, and even the more moderate amongst them bewailed the elaborate ornamentation affected by the ladies of rank. Add to this that not a few ecclesiastics carried their private woes into their preaching, and instead of an instruction on a truth of Faith, gave bitter criticism of their spiritual superiors. Nor were the religious backward in this respect (1). The Schism had of course, exaggerated all this, as Gerson was to find when he went to Bruges, with the result that his tract on the *Manner of Behaving in a time of Schism* condemned those who played on the passions of the crowd and excited them to oppose their superiors. A more apt quotation of the stand of Gerson may be made from a speech at the Synod of Lyons (1423) wherein he set down four rules for those who had to preach (2). He said in part : « The manners of superiors, ecclesiastical as well as temporal, are not to be bitterly criticised before the people. The mode of life of ecclesiastics, even those of the lower order, pastors and religious especially, must not be discussed openly either. And as to the manner of dress of women, it is so difficult to reach accord that nothing is to be gained by criticising it from the pulpit, for what one man would condemn another would find tolerable (3). »

When he spoke before the people, Gerson warned them against the tendency to appreciate a man's worth as an orator by the violence of his attacks upon the vices of superiors (4). Such a criterion was wrong. « We must obey our Princes and overlords, even if they do give a bad example (5). » For the people, just as he had done for the Bishops and clergy, he

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nardine of Siena, to the same effect as the words just quoted. Cfr Clamanges, *Opera*, ed. Lydius, pp. 143-145.

(1) II, 537 : « Status Privilegiatorum ad praedicandum debet secundum qualitatem auditorum formare sermonem, ne coram laicis, et subditis detegantur vitia clericorum et Dominorum. »

(2) II, 570-575 : *Sermo de reddendo debito factus Lugduni in sancta Synodo.*

(3) II, 574. Cfr II, 537.

(4) III, 944.

(5) *Ibid :* « Nos debemus obedire dominis nostris, etiamsi mali sunt. Et qui vobis aliter praedicaret, ipse male ageret ».

held out a virtue that belonged to their state. It was the virtue of obedience (1). Over and over in his instructions to the people of Paris he stressed the value of this virtue, and the rules that he drew up for the guidance of preachers were inspired by the same motive. He insisted that they instruct the people and not excite them (2). The tracts that he composed on the truths of Faith were done with the idea of supplying sermon matter to preachers and all of the insistence he put upon the care which Bishops should use in choosing and ordaining priests was directed to the same end (3).

The trouble of the Fourteenth Century was that the ministry of preaching was abused rather than neglected. There were some Prelates who overlooked entirely their obligation, but that must not be taken at a sign of utter neglect. The parish clergy and the religious generally held true to the office, although in the discharge of their duty they were not always perfect. Both classes failed on all of the points indicated above. With the religious there was an additional danger, that inasmuch as they were preaching Orders all of the members of each Congregation had to preach to the people (4). Not all, certainly, had the talent of the great orators of the time, and some did so poorly that it would have been better if they never tried to preach.

Gerson's project was to limit the number of those permitted to teach from the pulpit (5). Before permission was granted to any they should be subjected to an examination to see what was

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(1) III, 1113 : « Comprimam sermonem, loquendo de virtute generali quae comprehendit omnes alias virtutes, scilicet obedientia. » Cfr III, 1112 ; III, 1051 ; III, 1263.

(2) II, 545.

(3) Cfr I, 124 ; II, 549, 560 ; I, 425. Gerson insisted that tracts be composed, and that they be put in the possession of priests. Cfr I, 107 : « sciatur de collatione ordinum, ubi summa adhiberi debet cautio qualiter geritur, specialiter qui et quales assumuntur ad sacerdotium. »

(4) II, 549 : « Fiat ... provisio sufficiens aliqua pro praedicatoribus..., quatenus ad pietatem magis quam ad quaestum suam valeant praedicationem ordinare. » II, 548 : « Arceatur insuper tam generalis licentia apud quosdam religiosos, qui protinus ut aliquis sciverit duo verba proferre volubilitate linguae, inthronizant eum in cathedra praedicandi. »

(5) I, 106 : « Rursus expediret pauciores et electiores praedicatores Verbi Dei, ad populum qui non adulterarent Verbum Dei modis vitiosissimis praedicandi. »

their knowledge of the doctrines they must preach, and whether they had good sense enough to adhere to essentials and not be taken away with a taste for fables (1). All of the insistence that he laid on the maintenance of a School of Theology in every diocese finds an explanation here. Gerson would have men properly trained for their tasks, by studying Theology above all other sciences. So too, the movement for the reform in the educational system at the University was directed to the end that students be habituated to the study of the truths that they must later, in their ministry, preach to the people. The same conviction made Gerson insist that Prelates attend to their duties of preaching to their flock (2). They were the ones best prepared for the office. Their training must have been better than that of the religious. Most of all they had the responsibility for the welfare of souls. They with the parish priests were the ones who received the benefice and so to them fell the onus. They had to lead by example. They had to guide and instruct. By way of lending them a good example, although he was himself under no obligation to do so, Gerson began in the year 1402, a series of sermons on the Seven Capital Sins, the Seven Petitions of the Our Father, the Commandments, the Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost, etc. (3). These sermons were preached for the most part in the Church of St. Jean en Grève (4). All the reward that Gerson asked for his zeal was that the people might remember him in their

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(1) II, 548 : « fiat amplius apud ipsos qui se praedicationibus exponunt, examinatio prius circa generalia nostrae Fidei, etc. »

(2) II, 544-545. Gerson based his argument upon a principle of Justice. Since preaching was an integral part of the duty of a Pastor, he could not see how anyone holding the benefice for the care of souls could in conscience neglect his task. « Denique cum beneficium detur propter officium... dijudicent apud se hi qui praedicationis officium sibi maxime debitum vel nesciunt vel omittunt. »

(3) III, 901 : « Et dicam primum de septem peccatis mortalibus... Deinde de septem donis, de septem beatitudinibus, de septem virtutibus, ... De septem quoque Sacramentis, de septem operibus misericordiae, tam spiritualibus quam corporalibus. Ac de septem diebus septimanae, quomodo se habendum sit unoquoque die. »

(4) III, 899-1070. Bourret dates these sermons 1402-1403. It is clear that they were preached in a sequence. References to the *Romance of the Rose* made in several sermons confirm the reasoning of Bourret.

prayers (1). This series of instructions forms the best introduction to the preaching of Gerson. His intention in them was to do what he could for the correction of the faults of the public, and under the heads of : Pride, Covetousness, Lust, Envy, Anger, Gluttony and Sloth, he signaled the evils of the day (2). Other sermons that he was preaching at almost the same time are remarkable for their form (3). But these are remarkable for form and content both. It is unfortunate that we have not an edition of the French sermons of Gerson. For they more than the Latin translations bring out the simplicity and the lucidity of these plain talks which he gave to the people. Other men of the day were addressing their congregations in French, but none of them descended as well as he to the needs of the people, and none ot them succeeded as well in kindling fires of strong spirituality in their hearts. That the example of the man was not without fruit is clear. For it was not long before the clergy felt the worth of such preaching, and even in the lifetime of Gerson his sermons were many times copied and were consulted by his fellow-priests with the same reverence that they carried to the consultation of the sermons of Bernard or Augustine (4).

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(1) III, 901 : « Meum ergo propositum est, divino auxilio mediante, facere me formalem partem contra publica vitia, tum propter gratiam acquirendam ... tum ut merear habere vestras orationes. »

(2) The order observed in the sermons was as follows : Sermon for the First Sunday of Advent, — on Gluttony (III, 899-909), for the Second, Third and Fourth Sundays of Advent, — on Lust (III, 910-932), for the First Sunday after Epiphany, — on Covetousness (III, 1003-1014), for Septuagesima Sunday, — on Sloth (III, 1031-1040), for Sexagesima Sunday, — on Anger (III, 1041-1047), for Quinquagesima Sunday, — on Envy (1048-1054), for the First Sunday of Lent, — on Pride (III, 1055-1061, 1070-1076).

(3) Most noteworthy is the *Ad Deum vadit*, a sermon preached by Gerson on Good Friday 1403. The text that he followed in commenting on the History of the Passion was not the Gospel text read at the Mass of the day, but the account which he had given in his *Harmony of the Gospels*. This sermon of Gerson's lasted both morning and afternoon of Good Friday, and consisted in a commentary on the story of the Passion with a prayer to correspond to each consideration.

(4) By the year 1419 at least one collection of the sermons of Gerson been made, for Gerson could speak of it is a letter to the Prince. In 1423 the brother of Gerson told of a collection of the Sermons that Gerson preached at Constance. Cfr III, 233 : « Item collectorium quorumdam

If Gerson took so readily to the work of preaching to the people it was not because he regarded it as an easy office. No one experienced more than he the feeling of responsibility. When called upon to preach, he devoted long hours to the preparation of his sermon, or if he had to rise without sufficient notice, he was sure to apologize to his auditors for the fact that he had not had time enough to devote to his work (1). The seriousness with which he held the duty of preaching may best be seen in the sermon delivered at the Synod of Rheims (2). There he outlined what he thought to be the qualities necessary in one who rose to instruct the people. « The office of preaching », said he, « demands that one possess a nature that is quick, shrewd and versatile. It demands an eloquence that pours out generously words that please and persuade. It demands a knowledge of the Scriptures and of all else that encourages good conduct. It demands that one be schooled in appreciating human nature and in understanding the manner of men's action. It demands an exemplary life in the preacher, otherwise more harm will be done by example than good exhortation could correct. The preacher must be a spiritually-minded man, for otherwise how could he assist others to ascend in the Love of God if he

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opusculorum in Gallico nuper editorum, de praeceptis Dei, de examine conscientiae, de scientia bene moriendi, de contemplatione, de mendicitate animae. Sermo de Passione Christi qui incipit : *Ad Deum vadit.* Sermo de mortuis : *Sancta ergo et salubris est cogitatio.* Item exhortatio de triplici via regis : *Vivat Rex* » ; and I, CLXXVIII : « Volumen in quo continentur plures sermones ejus in concilio Constantiensi. »

For the prestige which his name enjoyed in the Fifteenth Century, cfr E. VANSTEENBERGHE, *Autour de la docte ignorance. Une controverse sur la théologie mystique au* XV^e^ *siècle*, published in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, tome IV, p. 495, Munster in Westphalia. Vansteenberghe quotes the words of a scholar of the late Fifteenth Century : « Gerson habet nomen juxta nomen magnorum in terra, et scripsit multa quae deferuntur in omnem locum. »

(1) II, 549 : « Addito quod plus sollicitudinis et temporis apponet aliquis praedicator Verbi Dei in uno sermone rite componendo, retinendo, et pronunciando quam advocatus unus per multos dies patrocinando. » I, 106 : « Si enim res omnium difficillima, arduissima et sanctissima commissa est passim multis insciis, incompositis, dissolutis quid mirandum si scandala potius in audientibus et praedicantibus quam aedificatio solida suscitentur. »

(2) II, 545-549.

himself was not afire with that Love (1). » The life of any man who has the care of souls, must of necessity according to Gerson, be a perfect life. It was for that reason chiefly that he elevated the Secular Clergy to a level higher than that of the religious. The latter were admittedly « striving for perfection, » he said, « but the former were bound by their office to the exercise of all the virtues » (2). These requirements like all those that he asked of preachers may have been regarded in his day as extreme. One thing is certain, that he did not advance such suggestions if there was not hope that some would adopt and follow them. If Gerson could urge so high a standard upon the priests of his day, it must have been that the attainment of that standard was not entirely out of their reach, and that many were well enough disposed to strive after it.

It is quite possible that in giving the list of qualities that should belong to those who preached to the people, Gerson was unconsciously describing himself. It needs only casual acquaintance with the substance of his sermons to assure anyone that he had a mind quick to adapt itself, as well as a power of persuasion and an unction that made his lessons easy to hear. As to knowledge of the Scriptures, we know from his home-life how thoroughly he became saturated with them, so that his language took on the turn of expression, and he voiced his ideas in the phrases of the Scriptures (3). That he was a keen student of human nature is apparent likewise in his sermons, for he adapted himself to his auditory so well that oftentimes in the presence of two sermons, one preached before the Court, and the other before the people, one would be

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(1) « Exigitur ergo ad officium praedicationis ingenium velox, solers, atque versatile... Exigitur eloquentia torrens et vehemens, suadibilis et suavis, copiosaque, ne adhaereat lingua palato vel arescat... Exigitur cognitio Scripturarum sacrarum cum ceteris omnibus quae ad mores spectant... Exigitur multiplex experientia actuum humanorum et conditionis annotatio eorum qui docendi sunt. Exigitur exemplaris vita et conversatio irreprehensibilis,... aliena ab omni crimine, praesertim ab avaritia et luxuria, quae maxime sunt contraria famae ; alioquin plus destruet exemplo quam aedificet verbo. Vox operum fortius sonat quam verborum. Exigitur denique gustatio spiritus per contemplationem. »

(2) II, 534. Cfr above, Chapter VI, p. 105.

(3) Chapter II, p. 22.

tempted to assert that the same man was not the author of both (1). Whereas he was an ardent scholar when he spoke before the learned, his speech when he addressed the crowd was simple and unassuming, and not overburdened by the reasonings and citations from pagan authors that made up the style of the learned. No need to mention the depth of his piety that won the admiration of his contemporaries. His natural gifts must have been very great also, otherwise he could not have used successfully the many oratorical devices to which he resorted, nor have won the praise that men gave him when they said that to speak « elegantly and eloquently was his custom (2). » As Schwab aptly describes him, « he was both in theory and in practice, by the power of his thought and the vigor of his speech, by his knowledge of himself and of his fellow-men, and by reason of his devotion to all that interested the welfare of Church and State,... qualified in the highest degree for the ministry of salvation, as he himself described the act of preaching the Word of God (3). »

The preaching of the late Middle Ages was very much according to a type that is realized in the sermons of Gerson. The sermons were for the most part Scriptural. Better than that, it may even be said that the whole point of the sermon was crystalized in an excerpt from the Scriptures, and the task of the orator was to extract from the text quoted all the spiritual nourishment that it contained. This quality surely was to the advantage of the preachers and made for unity in their sermons. In an article which he wrote on the *Technique of the Sermon in the Middle Ages*, Gilson has indicated what were the qualities of style customarily used (4). The conclusions which he makes were based for the most part on a study of the sermons of Michael Menot, a Franciscan preacher in the first years of the Sixteenth Century. But since

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(1) II, 570. Gerson insisted that sermons be adapted to the auditory. Cfr p. 155, note 1.

(2) *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. III, p. 602 : « eleganter ac eloquenter more suo verba fecit cancellarius ecclesiae Parisiensis. »

(3) Schwab, o. c., pp. 380-381.

(4) E. Gilson, *Michel Menot et la technique du sermon médieval*, article in the *Revue d'histoire franciscaine*, tome II, pp. 301-360, 1925.

Menot was quite dependent upon the writings of Gerson (1), drawing from them much of his inspiration, and also since most of the sermons of Gerson realize the features mentioned by Gilson as characteristic of the period we adopt the method of Gilson in this brief study of the sermons of Gerson.

It is well, however, before beginning a criticism of Gerson's sermons to recall that not all of them have come down to us in their integrity. This is partly due to the fact that whereas the greater part of the sermons of the Chancellor were delivered in French, they were edited in Latin by Koelhoff, von Kaysersberg, Brisgoek, Wimpheling and others (2). In an introduction to his edition of the sermons of Gerson, Wimpheling asserts that the sources from which he drew were in the form of notes taken down by admirers of Gerson the while he preached, so no claim was made to express verbally the text which was preached (3). There are some manuscripts, such as those to be found at Tours and in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* at Paris which give some of the sermons of Gerson in the French of the Fifteenth Century (4). From the viewpoint of the development of the French language these have great worth and deserve to be edited. But for the matter of ideas contained, they have next to nothing to add to the printed edition as given by Du Pin. No pretence at a study of these manuscripts will be made here, for we are concerned with the ideas rather than with the form of expression of the man, and address an English rather than a French reading public.

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(1) E. Bourret, *Essai historique et critique sur les sermons français de Gerson d'après les manuscrits inédits de la Bibliothèque Impériale et la Bibliothèque de Tours*, p. 82, Paris, 1858.

(2) L. Hain, *o. c.*, vol. I, part. II, p. 460 ff.

(3) III, 897 ; *Prologus Jacobi Wimphelingii in Sermones et Tractatus Joannis Gersonii.* «Sermones hic sequutores ne dubites, candide lector, fuisse Gersonis... Sermones enim istos, cum christianissimus Cancellarius ad populum faceret, ex ore ipsius concionantis a piis auditoribus excepti sunt ; et licet non ad verbum, tamen ad sententiam transcripti. Et quidem in gallica lingua ; sed indubie non eo tenore, non ea dulcedine, non illo ornatu quo ipse, dum praedicaret usus fuit. »

(4) Mss. fr. 24,840, lat., 14,974, at the *Bibliothèque Nationale* contain sermons in French by Gerson. The catalogue of the Bibliothèque lists many volumes of sermons of Gerson in the *Fonds français*, e. g., nos 936, 970, 974, 977, 1029, 13,318-9, 24,839-42. But in very few instances are the sermons written in French. At Tours however, there are thirteen sermons in French in Mss. no 386. Cfr Bourret, *o. c.*, p. 45 ff.

As above remarked, the sermons of Gerson were scriptural from the *thema* to the conclusion. Once he had stated his subject to the people he tried to turn their troughts to prayer. This second step was known as the *prothema* (1). In it the preachers of the Middle Ages sought to dispose their hearers for the lesson they were going to teach them, and to make them responsive to the inspiration that would come to them with the hearing of the Word. Not infrequently, Gerson passed immediately from the enunciation of his text to a prayer. At other times he pointed out the needs of his hearera, their temptations, their failings, and made that a reason for asking Divine aid for himself who was to teach, and the people who were to learn through his preaching (2). It is a characteristic of his devotion to Our Lady that the prayer that he recited before beginning his sermon was the Hail Mary.

As a rule he divided his subject into three parts. Exceptions occur to this rule, but the divisions were never prolonged endlessly as was the custom amongst scholars. Gerson's affection for triads is no doubt a fruit of his study of St. Bonaventure, who in honor of the Holy Trinity scrupulously divided the points of his argument into threes. His development was clear, logical and lively. Practically all of the devices that we know of to-day were put into use in his sermons. As he tried in his teaching to accommodate himself to the mentality of those who heard him, so in his sermons he attached great importance to keeping the interest of his congregation alive. His

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(1) Gilson, art. c., pp. 309-310, remarks that the whole purpose of the *prothema* was to conduct the hearer from the text of the sermon to a prayer. « Si nous nous plaçons maintenant devant le problème technique soulevé par l'insertion de cette prière dans la trame régulière du discours, il nous apparaît assez compliqué et nous pouvons le formuler en ces termes : un thème scripturaire dont tout le sermon doit sortir étant donné, comment lui rattacher une prière qui ne s'y trouve pas nécessairement reliée ? C'est précisément le *prothema* qui permettra de résoudre le problème. »

(2) Cfr III, 926 : « In benedicta hac die ad te recurramus, Mater Dei gloriosa, etc. » III, 932 : « Postulemus, Fratres in Christo, ut verbum quod hodie factum est, illud in me propheticum adimpleat : *Dominus dabit verbum evangelizantibus virtute multa*, quoniam insipidum, inane, et invalidum erit verbum oris mei, si non accipiat virtutem multam a Verbo Dei Patris. » III, 1082, 1093, 1123, etc.

style of preaching was adapted to his auditors (1). When he spoke before an intellectual audience he captivated his hearers by his display of learning; when he addressed the common people his speech was simple and his reasoning easily followed. If he expounded the Scriptures to clerics he went beyond the literal sense of the words and introduced the mystical, the moral and the allegorical interpretations (2). Before the congregations in the churches he was sure to make a practical approach to his subject and to enliven his talk by anecdotes drawn either from the *Books of Examples* or from his own experience (3). With all classes of auditors he kept secure the ideal of preaching, that it was to instruct and inspire, and each of his sermons has a moral clearly drawn. If he was scholarly in his address to the members of the University and the Court, defining his terms and marshaling his arguments so as to draw the assent of reason, with the parishioners of St. Jean en Grève his sermons were concrete and delivered in a catechetic style with questions and answers used to bring out the truth that he would teach (4). With graphic imagery and keen analogy he helped the people understand their duty. By direct exhortation or through the power of example he led them to fulfill it. His emotional appeal was great although

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(1) II, 570 : « Debet, teste Gregorio, formari sermo Doctorum secundum qualitatem auditorum. Nam altera doctis, altera minus eruditis, altera populo, altera clero lingua loquendum est. » III, 425 : « consoni loqui voluimus Philosophis et Theologis scholasticis talia quae non abhorrent a suis traditionibus et scholis ; et si effectum est qualiscumque ex parte, judicium sit legentium et gloria Deo. » Cfr Piaget, *art. c.*, p. 253 ; Jadart, *o. c.*, p. 140.

(2) III, 932-938 ; 1021-1030 ; 1123-1134. Cfr Piaget, *art. c.*, p. 246. Gerson had great affection for the anagogical, tropological as well as for the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures, but he rarely had recourse to them in public discourse and that only before a cultured audience.

(3) The sermons preached to the people are replete with examples. Phrases such as : « *Nota de scholastico qui noluit confiteri, nota exemplum de illa quae cruentari fecit, exemplum de virginibus, notate exemplum de Regina erga nuncios inimici Domini sui,* » recur constantly.

(4) This is particularly noticeable in the sermons given in the year 1402-1403. In these sermons Gerson set about to instruct the people and the method that he followed was that of the question and answer, thus : « gula an sit semper peccatum mortale ? Dico quod non nisi illa per quam quis transgreditur, aut scienter omittit aliquid Dei praeceptum, aut dum manducatur contra praeceptum ecclesiae sine excusatione. » III, 905-909. Cfr III, 914-918, 925, etc.

it was sober and not calculated to inspire fear. The result was that he was heard willingly by the people and by the lords. The theme that he preached by preference was the Love of God, and the method that he used was to attack the evil that was patent in the lives of the people and to point out to them how they could amend and improve their lives (1).

There are approximately one hundred of Gerson's sermons that have to be analyzed to form an appreciation of the content of his preaching. To take them separately or even collectively and attempt to give here a summary of their qualities would be too tedious a process. But since the preaching of the man is so intimately related with his reform projects some recognition must be paid to the matter that these sermons contain. For a handy division into which most of the chief lessons may be fitted we will consider the preaching of Gerson under three heads : Sermons on moral and dogmatic subjects, Sermons based on the Liturgy of the season and the Lives of the Saints, and Sermons preached on various occasions.

The moral sermons aimed at the conversion of the people to a better life. The summons that was repeated over and over in them was : *Do Penance and Believe the Gospel.* Other preachers might accentuate the proximity of Judgment Day and cry out : *Do Penance for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* They might talk as they would of the anger of God and the horrors of Hell. Gerson, for his part, could not forget the example and the love of Christ (2). If he roused the emotions of his hearers it was to a sense of hope rather than to a fear of foreboding. He knew that they erred, for the most, through ignorance and not by malice, so he began to instruct and to

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(1) III, 901 : « Meum ergo propositum est, divino auxilio mediante, facere me formalem partem contra publica vitia » ; II, 368 : « Liberet animam suam quisquis est inductus praedicator religionae christianae ». J. Zahn, *Einführung in die christliche Mystik*, p. 53, 5th ed. Paderborn, 1923 : « Gerson versprach sich von ernsten mystischen Studien eine Durchwärmung des geistlichen Lebens mit der heiligen Glut reiner, vollkommener Gottesliebe und insbesondere auch eine Belebung und Durchwärmung der Predigt, ein nicht geringer Lohn für das interesse an der Mystik. »

(2) III, 1112 : « Si profunde hoc in nobis senserimus non erit nobis curae consequi et acquirere magnos status, et ingentes pompas in hoc miserabili mundo transitorio. Omnium malorum radix auferretur, et sic cessarent alia mala. »

give counsel. He put his confidence, not in his own power of persuasion but in « the Spirit who breathes where He will » (1) and he prayed that « God would illumine all hearts and give them the strength to do Penance » (2).

Under the head of the Seven Deadly Sins, Gerson dealt with the passions that troubled mankind, and painted vice in so vivid a color as to arouse a sense of revulsion. But lest the people make their resolution general, and fail to adapt it to their own failings, he introduced into his sermons a process that was sure to keep the attention of his hearers riveted on his words. He discussed cases of conscience (3). Seeking to clear away the obstacles that prevented a full conversion he considered the faults of the people and passed judgment upon them, with the view, no doubt, to clear away the misconceptions of those who exaggerated the importance of peccadillos, or to disclose the bad faith of others who misused the Sacrament of Penance and concealed their failings instead of submitting them to the Power of the Keys. Each of the members of the congregation that listened to his words must thus have had some personal profit from the sermon preached. Sleeping consciences were prodded into life. Men were changed from a state of passivity and indifference and made to become more alert to the dangers that encompassed them. Most of all they were helped to know themselves better and enabled to forestall temptations and eradicate evil habits.

But the preaching of Gerson did not stop there. To hold up a mirror wherein the people might see the contradiction between their lives and their beliefs was good indeed, but to effect a complete cure it was not enough that the cause of the ailment be found out. The sick had to be helped to improve themselves. With this in view, Gerson turned the force of his eloquence to persuade his hearers that they could not afford to put off repentance, that they must open their hearts to the im-

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(1) III, 1264 : « Utinam Spiritus Sanctus pulsaret, et vocaret ad ostium cordium singulorum hominum, qui talibus coinquinati sunt vitiis, ut abstinerent et confiterentur. Spiritus Sanctus pulsat ad ostium nostrum linguis inflammatis, sancta praedicatione. »

(2) III, 918 : « Velit Deus illuminare omnia corda et dare fortitudinem ad poenitentiam agendum. »

(3) III, 905 ff.

pulse of Grace, and that they must form their wills (1). Some might say that they could not observe all the Commandments, that the Law of God was too difficult. « The trouble with such people, » said Gerson, « is that they are lacking in good-will and in the Love of God » (2). If he put great importance on preaching the lives of the Saints, it was that the faithful might be inspired by the example of the army of Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors and Virgins that had gone before them. The kernel of his teaching was the love of God. That was the virtue that he admired most in the Saints (3). Without the love of God all the exterior acts of devotion, all the penances and the visions were nothing (4). Knowledge itself was dangerous unless it was prompted by love, and the simple country-folk who had no learning stood, in the estimation of Gerson, on a far higher plane of spirituality than most of the scholars. To all he held out the idea of the two standards : « *an amor Dei, an mundi ?* (5) » He besought all to turn with full heart to God, and assured them that they had only to ask for mercy to obtain it (6).

The means for advance that he suggested were : prayer, self-study, humility and submission to the guidance of a spiritual director. Prayer would lead them to the contemplation of the life of Christ and in His sufferings they would find solace from their own failings (7). Self-scrutiny was to make them distrust their own ability, and to exercise a check over the desires of the heart and the demands of the senses (8). In a strikingly

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(1) III, 929 : « Incipe ergo cito et si mihi credes hodie. » III, 1587 : « Mon fils, dit le sage, ne veille mie attendre de demain à demain à toy convertir à Dieu. »

(2) III, 928-929.

(3) III, 1405 : « Aliqui magnificarent in sancto Petro honorem qui ei fit in universo mundo,... Ego vero non video quidquam in sancto Petro tanta laude dignum, sicut Fidem ejus, et suum erga Deum amorem. »

(4) III, 1151.

(5) III, 1417.

(6) III, 1590 : « Pourtant bonnes gens, en faisant fin et conclusion... mettons en ce saint temps de Carême toute nostre entente, nostre estude, et diligemment de nous convertir à Dieu... car certes si nous lui demandons grâce, nous ne serons point mis en Jugement... si nous lui demandons miséricorde, vraiment nous l'obtiendrons. »

(7) III, 1239.

(8) III, 1384 : « Qui se cognoscit, vitamque suam omnem, is novit Theologiam. »

poetic passage he invites his hearers to spend a moment in recollection at the beginning of each day, to think of the dangers that might arise, and to tell each of the senses that are to come into contact with the outside world what must be the character of their behavior. Then in the evening these « disciples » must be summoned again before conscience and questioned as to their action during the day (1). No one who came to know his weaknesses could feel other than humble, and that the virtue of humility might flourish in the lives of simple people and scholars Gerson never ceased to strive (2). He was against all the misguided mysticism that sought to become a law unto itself. He tried to obliterate from the lives of Bishops and clergy all the pomp and the vain display that made the people loath to approach them for guidance. And he never turned the people from their appointed leaders, but rather he made all advance in the spiritual life dependent upon the humility that confided in the direction of another (3). « If I saw a man with one foot in heaven, but who was relying only on his own effort to save himself, I would make him draw back and submit to the advice of a spiritual director ; for in no other way can he save himself (4). »

Though from a casual reading of the sermons of Gerson one would get the impression that he was more concerned with

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(1) III, 1098-1099 : « O devota christiana persona ! Mane cum surrexeris et es in camera tua aut in ecclesia, priusquam discipuli tui, scilicet cor tuum et quinque sensus excedunt scholas tuas, operari studeas secundum artem et statum tuum. Secreto eos intra te vocare debes ad scholam animae tuae, et ostium claudere, ne quisquam ad extra te impediat ; tunc dicas cordi tui principali discipulo, quod diligens sit in bene cogitando, sibi quoque a perversa caveat societate, et ne det consensum suum aut voluntatem peccato proditori. Sic dices oculo ut caveat a malo visu,... Auri dices, ut caveat audire fabulas,... Sed vesperi priusquam dormias necesse est sub magistram redire ad scholam suam, sedere in sede sua, advocare discipulos suos et eos interrogare lectionem eorum ; et si quid bene egerint, de omne hoc eos laudabis, et de malo vituperabis, atque castigabis virga disciplinae, in abstinentiis, aut jejuniis, aut eleemosynis, eis quoque minaberis. »

(2) III, 1123-1134 : *Sermon on Humility*. III, 1413, cites the humility of St. Paul. III, 1112, etc.

(3) III, 1403 : « Non est periculosior tentatio alicui religiosae personae aut domino, quam cum se judicet talem, quod non alterius egeat concilio. »

(4) III, 245.

the things to be done than with the things to be believed to be saved, the dogmatic content of his sermons is remarkable. The project to which he gave utterance in his first Advent sermon of the year 1402 embraced a series of talks on Sin, the Commandments, the Virtues, the Gifts of the Holy Ghost and the Sacraments (1). Other sermons attempted to instruct the people on the Nature and Attributes of God, on the Incarnation, the Passion, the Resurrection, and the means of Grace (2). The purpose of these talks was to explain the truths of religion in such a way that his hearers would not alone know the catechism but would know why they believed it (3). Thus when he came to speak of the Eucharist on the Feast of Corpus Christi he argued down objections that might be had against the Real Presence, and roused the Faith of these who heard him to seek solace in the Sacrament of the Altar in all their woes (4). « For this is the Bread that fortifies men against every adversity (5). »

Similarly with his sermons given on the Feast of the Holy Trinity. These are striking for their lucidity and force. The Feast of the Trinity was established for the whole Church by Pope John XXII, but the devotion long antedated that time. Feasts such as this were made the occasion for doctrinal discourses. To address the ordinary congregation on a subject such as the Trinity demands in any preacher a keenness of reason and a power of adaptation ; but Gerson's treatment of the mystery may rank with the best that even Bossuet or Lacordaire have given (6). He created the problem first,

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(1) III, 901 : « Et quoniam non possem in quolibet sermone praeliari aut loqui simul contra omnia vitia, et pro omnibus virtutibus, sumam eas per partes. Et dicam primum de septem peccatis mortalibus, applicando septem petitiones ipsius Pater Noster, et loquendum de decem praeceptis Legis. Et deinde de septem donis, de septem beatitudinibus, et septem virtutibus. De septem quoque Sacramentis et septem operibus misericordiae, tam spiritualibus quam corporalibus. »

(2) Cfr III, 1268-1283 ; 933-960 ; 1154, 1294, 1208-1209 ; 1134-1203.

(3) III, 1280 ; « ad ostendendum quod non omnino sine ratione credimus id quod credimus. »

(4) III, 1289-1290.

(5) III, 1291 : « Hic ergo est panis, qui fortificat cor hominis contra omnem adversitatem. Est hic panis vitae qui comedi debet ad similitudinem Agni Paschalis. »

(6) III, 1278-1283 : *Sermon on the Trinity ;* III, 1268-1278 : *Another*

as though some were not content to believe the mystery but demanded an explanation. Gerson summons such human curiosity to answer questions of an earthly import. « Answer me. What are the secrets of creation ? What is the nature of the snow, the rainbow, the earthquake, the thunder ? I dare say that human curiosity cannot conceive of the power or the nature of thes implest thing that exists... But perhaps you object to me that it is not curiosity that makes you ask the nature of the mystery. I tell you that if you have not Faith you cannot understand it. » He then asked for humility of will and of intellect on the part of his hearers, and with that assured, he introduced them into « three schools », that of nature, that of the Scriptures, and that of their own souls, from which he was to bring them not a proof of the mystery, — for that was impossible, — but he hoped to show them that their Faith was not altogether without reason. He then pointed out the conclusions as to the Nature of God that could be drawn from a study of nature, interpreted those passages of the Scriptures which contain the revelation of the doctrine, and invited his hearers to see in their own spiritual faculties a representation of the Trinity. Reason, knowledge and will, — these portrayed the relations of the Trinity, — reason, in the likeness of the Father generates knowledge, and reason and knowledge beget love (1). It was preaching such as this that made for the power which Gerson exercised over his hearers, and must have roused in them a response of Faith and love to the mysteries that he explained.

Sermon on the Trinity was made a year later. « Memor sum superiori anno de tribus me dixisse speculis, naturae, scripturae et humanae creaturae. »

(1) III, 1278 : « Veni, humana curiositas, quae tanta vis, vel estimas scire, et quae interrogas, quid sit de benedicta Trinitate. Veni, te oro, et responde primum ad ea quae proponam tibi de rebus terrenis, ut postmodum videre valeas qualem cognitionem de coelestibus habere queas. Dic mihi quae res est sol, luna, et stellae quae quotidie inspicis, et quo motu universum coelum defertur... Sed descendo ad terram. Responde mihi : quomodo formantur nix, glacies, arcus coelestis, aut iris, terraemotus, fluxus marini, tonitrua, fulgura, et venti ?... Audeo curiositati affirmare quod non potest minimae rei quae sit in mundo concipere virtutem, naturam, colorem et figuram. » The theme of the « three schools» was not original to Gerson, it having been adapted from the *Itinerarium Mentis ad Deum* of St. Bonaventure.

In the course of his preaching on the Feasts of the Liturgical Year, Gerson developed many such points of doctrine. But the chief advantage which he saw to be derived from such sermons was that the people might feel the force of the spiritual brotherhood which bound their lives with those of the Saints and that through a devout meditation on the example of Christ and His elect they might be moved to devotion. The sermons which he preached on the Blessed Mother and the Saints make up almost one half of the volume of his preaching as we have it (1). Through all, he displays a versatility of style and charm of narrative that helped to make the presence of the Saints seem close at hand. When he preached on the Feast of Saint Bernard, he had the Saint himself tell the story of his life (2). If he gave a sermon on the Feast of St. Antony he drew a moral from the temptations of the Saint and pointed out what remedies the people must apply in combating the afflictions that came to them (3). For those who were suffering from all the injustice of a corrupt government, and the misery that plague and war had brought upon them he held out comfort in the life of the Blessed Mother and the example of Christ. Like the author of the *Imitation* he pointed out the Cross as the source of all consolation. « O devout Christian soul », he cried, « lift up your eyes to contemplate this sorrowful Passion ! What do you behold there if not love ? Run thither, then, in all your necessities, dangers, trials and adversities. Run thither as to a certain refuge, and be sure that you will not perish (4). » He besought the people to gaze upon the life of Christ, « whose every act is for our instruction » (5). He urged them to study to imitate the virtues of Christ, and to seek nothing better than to draw near

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(1) III, 1317-1551.

(2) 1417-1427 : *Sermon on St. Bernard ;* III, 1418 : « Avertite igitur paulisper mentem a me, et ipsum Bernardum, non me, loqui putate. »

(3) III, 1378 : « Facile scire potest, quod si Deus non pepercit bono suo amico Beato Antonio... nos peccatores necessario puniemur, aut inviti per damnationem, aut voluntarie per poenitentiam et satisfactionem. » There are three sermons on St. Antony to be read in III, 1372-1403.

(4) III, 1195 : « O anima devota, sustine paulisper, et eleva oculos tuos ad hanc lamentosam Passionem,... quid intuebaris nisi amorem et summam Charitatem. »

(5) III, 1112 : « Omnis Christi actio nostra est instructio. »

to him in the Sacrament of the Eucharist (1). Few men of his day took a saner and a simpler tone in their preaching than Gerson did in his. Like the great apostle he had one Gospel that he preached constantly and that was the story of Christ's love. There was in his words a conviction and a persuasion which we cannot express here, but which those who heard him must have felt keenly. There was no lack of conformity between the truths that he preached and the life that he led. Where he invited his flock to go he walked on ahead. The Gospel that he advanced had become a part of his life, he burned with the desire to translate it to others, and his fidelity to the ministry of the pulpit finds its explanation in that; for like Saint Paul he felt that woe would betide him if he did not preach the Gospel.

Of the sermons which Gerson delivered on other than strictly religious subjects we have already a good idea (2). We have heard him speak before the Pope at Avignon and before the Court of France. So great was his reputation as an orator that the University made him her mouthpiece and he carried before those in authority the expression of her wishes. Several of his addresses were given before the Doctors of the University and abound with all the lore and the serried reasoning that was the pride of the schools (3). Time and again, in 1394, in 1405, in 1408 and in 1413, he appeared before the Court to demand that the Dukes call a halt in their quarrels of jealousy and bring peace to the land (4). We have seen him in the role of prosecutor of the Duke of Savoisy when the latter showed irreverence for the University officials and desecrated St. Catherine's Church. In 1408 he was to appear again before the Court to protest against an infringement upon the rights of the University by the provost of Paris (5). Two students of the University had been tried and hung without consideration for the authority of the Rector or for their privileges as clerics. Due to

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(1) III, 1283-1292 : *Sermon on the Eucharist.*

(2) Cfr pp. 58, 95, 103, 109, 137.

(3) III, 1449-1457 ; 932-938 ; 1021-1030.

(4) III, 1204-1214, *Paschal Sermon* on the text : *Pax Vobis ;* IV, 585-622 : Sermon entitled : *Long Live the King ;* IV, 625-642 : *Veniat Pax ;* IV, 658-680 : *Rex in sempiternum vive.*

(5) IV, 642-656 : *Pro Justitia.* Cfr Denifle-Chatelain, o. c., vol. IV, p. 153.

a plea which Gerson made for Justice, de Tignonville, who was the one at fault, was made to make amends for his action, to remove the bodies of the students from the gallows where they still hung, to treat them reverently and to bring them, swathed in black, to the Church of the Mathurins where the Rector received them and saw that they were buried with due honors (1).

The great quarrel of the day, however, was that between the Houses of Burgundy and Orleans. As long as Philip the Bold was alive there was a certain pretense made at concord and the struggle was to see who could hold the reins of government in France. The balance of power lay really on the side of Burgundy. He had the rich lands, and controlled to a considerable extent the flow of commerce. But the Duke of Orleans was near to the King, and seemed to have been able to turn the Queen to follow his counsel, and for twenty years the see-saw of power tilted one way and another, with both parties trying, more or less secretly, to weaken the force of the other and thus gain permanent control. In 1404, the Duke of Burgundy died and left his dominions to an impetuous son, John the Fearless. That same year the Duke of Orleans walked off with the proceeds of a governmental tax. He had been trying since 1397 to check the influence of Burgundy in the north (2). He had made a truce with the seneschal of Luxemburg and in 1402 gained a title to the duchy of Luxemburg and the county of Chimy. All this served to heighten the resentment of Burgundy, but when in 1405 he concluded an alliance with the Duke of Gelderland and thus threatened Burgundy from the north as well as from the east, the Duke of Burgundy felt that it was time to take measures for his own protection. For two years he bided his time, but his predicament became more aggravated. Finally, in 1407, on the 23rd of November he gave orders to his men to waylay the Duke of Orleans, and on the same night, as he was coming from the Palace of the Queen, Orleans was attacked in the rue Barbette and murdered (3).

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(1) Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 436.

(2) Pirenne, *o. c.*, vol. II, pp. 229 ff.

(3) *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. III, pp. 730 ff.; *Chronique de Monstrelet*, ed. by Douet-d'Arcq, vol. I, pp. 167 ff.

John fled almost immediately from Paris, but he sent from Ghent an admission of his crime and defended himself on the grounds that Orleans was the cause of all the evil that befell the King and the Kingdom (1). The sentiment of the people was for him, but the nobility stood out against him. He volunteered to come to Paris and make a defence of his conduct, and on March 8th, 1408, John Petit, a theologian attached to the service of Burgundy made, before the Court and the Princes assembled, an apology for the action of his master (2). Petit took as his text the words of St. Paul : *Radix omnium malorum est cupiditas*. He portrayed the Duke of Orleans as the cause of all the dangers that harassed the country and declared that since Orleans was a tyrant the Duke of Burgundy was entitled to take judgment into his own hands. More than that, he was bound to do so. Many of the Doctors of the University shared these views and upheld the thesis of Petit (3). But others stood for justice and demanded that the Duke of Burgundy do penance and make amends for his crime and, of these, Gerson was amongst the first to brave the strength of the Burgundians. In his sermon on Justice preached before the Court in 1408 may be seen a condemnation of the doctrines of Tyrannicide (4). Following this, others took up the attack, especially when the bereaved Duchess of Orleans came to Paris in August 1408, and demanded that justice be done (5). But the power of Burgundy was gaining vigor every day, and rather than risk to rend the country with a civil war, a truce was decided upon, and was struck at Chartres, March 9th, 1409. Gerson had ever been one of the strongest advocates of peace in the land, but he would not tolerate the teaching of Tyrannicide, and again in 1409 he returned to attack the thesis of Petit (6). Meanwhile, as Burgundy played more and more into

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(1) The nobility would have proceeded immediately to a prosecution of the Duke of Burgundy did they not fear a revolt of the people. Cfr Cartellieri, *o. c.*, pp. 37-38.

(2) *Ibid.*, pp. 42-48; A. Coville, *Le véritable texte de la justification du Duc de Bourgogne par Jean Petit*, Extrait de la *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, Paris, 1911.

(3) Cartellieri, *o. c.*, p. 39.

(4) IV, 642-656 ; cfr Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 436.

(5) *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. IV, pp. 90 ff.

(6) In the course of his tract *De auferibilitate Papae ab Ecclesia*,

the hands of the English, sentiment strengthened against him in France, and though truce after truce was concluded they were at best temporary measures, for the young Duke of Orleans would not let the quarrel die. In 1413, the Burgundians were forced to leave Paris and the Armagnacs took control. One of the first things agitated was to have an official funeral service for the murdered Duke in the Cathedral of Notre Dame, and Gerson was the orator for the day. The Chronicler reports that the sermon startled many of the doctors of the University, since Gerson seemed to be more anxious to have enmity than peace with the Duke of Burgundy (1). In another address, before the Court, on Sept. 4th, 1413, Gerson attacked anew the teachings of Petit and condemned assertions drawn from the defence of Burgundy in 1408 (2). Feeling went more and more against the latter. The King declared him an enemy of the country, and a council of ecclesiastics was called to decide on the orthodoxy of the teaching of Petit. From this Council was issued on the 23rd of February, 1414, a decree condemning the propositions of Petit (3). In this Council Gerson was most prominent for his activity, so much so that John of Burgundy declared him an ungrateful wretch to make such return for all the favors he had had from the House of Burgundy (4). The Duke appealed from the decision of the Archbishop of Paris to that of the Pope. Later in the year both sides decided to carry their appeal to the Council of Constance which was shortly to be held, and Gerson as the chief agent in the condemnation of the teaching was

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Gerson says, II, 218 : « Quanto magis erronea et damnanda est assertio, quod licet unicuique subditorum, mox ut aliquis est tyrannus, ipsum viis omnibus fraudulentis et dolosis, sine quavis auctoritate vel declaratione Judiciaria morti tradere. »

(1) *Chronique de Monstrelet*, vol. III, p. 55 : « Auquel service prescha le chancellier de la dicte église de Notre-Dame de Paris, — nommé maistre Jehan Gerson,... si parfondement et hautement que plusieurs docteurs en théologie et autres s'en esmerveillèrent... Auquel sermon il sembloit qu'il voulsist plus esmouvoir la guerre que l'apaiser contre le duc de Bourgogne, et à sa destruction. »

(2) IV, 669-670.

(3) V, 320-322 ; Denifle-Chatelain, o. c., vol. IV, pp. 294-295 ; Hefele-Leclercq, o. c., vol. VII, p. 294.

(4) Hefele-Leclercq, o. c., vol. VII, p. 292 ; Schwab, o. c., p. 610.

named the personal representative of the King of France at the Council (1).

To the Council he was to take with him not alone the responsibility of sustaining the cause of righteousness but a determination to work as much as he could to establish peace in the Church and to point out a road to the reform. The controversy in which he faced boldly the anger of one of the most powerful Princes of the time had made him a marked figure. Knowledge of the continued zeal that he had displayed for the betterment of the lives of the people and their rulers made his name known in the University circles and amongst the hierarchy. But the thing that most enhanced the prestige he was to enjoy at Constance was his reputation as a man who knew how to inspire others by the power of his words. Good men were needed at the Council to show in their lives the ideal of the Gospel to which it was hoped all might soon return. Men of courage were sought out also, men who would not wither under attack. but who would have the vigor to speak their convictions and challenge others by carrying them out. But the great need was to have a man whose words could inspire resolution in all who heard them, an orator who could sway the feelings and bring conviction to men's minds. This role was to be filled by Gerson at the Council of Constance, and filled so well that men were to talk of him as the soul of the whole assembly.

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(1) Valois, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 273. Valois quotes from the Register of the Chapter of Notre Dame under the date of January 9th 1415 : « Dominus cancellarius declarando suam intentionem dixit quod non iret ad concilium Constantiense pro provincia Senonensi nec pro Universitate; non vult tamen omnino denegare quid illuc vadet. » Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, p. 188, and Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 503, declare that he acted in Constance in the threefold capacity of representative of the King, of the University and of the Archbishop of Sens. This opinion is substantiated by a passage wherein Gerson recalls that was at Constance in a threefold capacity. II, 388.

CHAPTER IX

CONSTANCE AND AFTER

The Council of Constance was perhaps the most remarkable gathering in the Middle Ages. Certainly no other Church Council had the same provocation nor so varied a career as that of Constance. The situation that made it imperative was unique in the annals of Christendom, since never before had the Church been rent by schism during so long a period as that which marked the duration of the Great Schism of the West. Rarely had she been in greater need of peace that she was when Pope John XXIII united with the Emperor Sigismund in convoking an assembly of Princes and Prelates, cleric and lay to meet in November of the year 1414, for the purpose of discussing the question of ecclesiastical reform. No Council up till that time had had so cosmopolitan a representation; none had been as revolutionary in its principles, nor as absolute in its rulings as Constance was to be. But the resolution that inspired those who gathered in thousands in answer to the summons of Pope and Emperor was one that was born of frequent disappointments, and the spirit that was to unite the members of the Council and maintain them in their tasks despite the difficulties that were to beset them was a spirit of hope that by their efforts peace would come to the Church. As the meetings proceeded, various points of difference were to arise, and make issues between individuals, and the nations represented. But every member of the Council, no matter what his prejudice or politics had come with the idea of bringing a truce to the difficulties that harassed the Church. The idea of peace dominated all else; peace was to be had, no matter at what cost (1).

(1) Ulrich von Richental, *Chronik der Constanzer Conzils*, ed. by M. R. Buck, Tubingen, 1882. The Chronicle, kept by an inhabitant of Constance who was anxious to record all that would heighten the prestige of the city, gives, in great detail, the story of the coming and

It the long years that were burdened with disappointments and delusions, Gerson had not ceased to work for the peace of the Church. We have seen him go to the Court of Avignon in 1403 to try, where others had failed, to persuade Benedict XIII to admit the policy of Cession and to apply it (1). We have seen that his influence had a sobering effect on the angry demands for separation in 1396 and again in 1406 (2). But he, with his friends was realizing the futility of their effort against the obstinacy of Benedict and already they were looking around for some sure system for union when in the year 1407, Gregory XII, shortly after his election to the See of Rome, made overtures of peace with the University of Paris, the King of France and Court of Avignon. Gerson was a member of a commission appointed by the University that waited on Benedict in the month of May of the same year but which could not wring from him the written indication of good faith which they hoped to present to Gregory on their arrival in Rome two months later (3). In the absence of such a testimonial the suspicions of Gregory were aroused and he too disappointed the representatives of the University who had set out upon their mission full of certainty that peace was at hand (4). From this time on Gerson was converted fully to the doctrines of Henry of Langenstein and he preached the neces-

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going of the members of the Council, and tells the number of their retinue. D'Ailly had forty-four attendants. But this was meager compared to the suite of some other ecclesiastics. Such was the pomp that scandalized the people, and against which Gerson protested. *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. V, pp. 438 ff.; Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, pp. 186 ff.

(1) Chapter IV, pp. 58-59.

(2) Chapter IV, p. 63.

(3) Salembier, *Le grand schisme d'Occident*, pp. 227-230.; Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VI, pp. 1306 ff.; *Chroniqued u Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. III, pp. 502 ff.; Valois, *o. c.*, vol. III, p. 507, gives a critique of the sources which tell of the Mission sent from France to the two Popes.

(4) The nephews of Gregory had much to do with his change of front; but the Roman Pope had good reason to be suspicious of the intention of the French Monarch, and to fear the suggested meeting of the Pontiffs in Genoa, since that city was under the control of Boucicaut who took his orders from the King of France. Cfr *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys*, vol. IV, p. 14.

sity of convening a General Council with or without the consent of the Popes.

Although he was not present at the Council of Pisa, he was in accord with the spirit of the assembly, and welcomed its decisions. As the delegates of the University of Oxford passed through Paris on their way to the Council he addressed them, congratulating the zeal that prompted them to unite with the Universities of Paris and Bologna in demanding a Council. He declared his conviction that the Council had power to depose the Popes for the good of the Church, and that, while ordinarily the Pope alone could summon a Council and give to it the authority that it possessed, the Council of Pisa was in itself licit and legitimate (1). In his writings at the time, but especially in his tract on *The Unity of the Church* which was written on the eve of the Council of Pisa these same ideas are put forth, if anything in plainer language (2). This tract might be considered the programme for the Council, but whether or not it was drawn up with that intent Gerson outlined with great exactitude the steps that were to be taken at Pisa. According to the principles of ecclesiastical law, the Council of Pisa constituted an act of revolt. Gerson himself recognized that it was in contradiction to the letter of the law, but following the lead of Henry of Langenstein he distinguished between the letter and the spirit and declared that the Supreme Lawgiver certainly could not have intended that a condition

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(1) II, 123-130 : *Propositio facta corum Anglicis.*

(2) II, 113-118 : *De unitate ecclesiastica.* This tract is dated Jan. 29, 1408 (i. e., 1409, N. S.). II, 116 : « Unitas Ecclesiae ad unum certum Christi vicarium, videtur per Concilium nunc celebrandum sic procuranda quod primo detur securitas tam per principes quam per alios quoscumque pro duobus contendentibus, si voluerint comparere, procedendo ad implendum juramenta sua atque vota. Quod si noluerint confidere, quaeratur ab eis cessio per procuratores legitimos. Quod si utrumque contempserint, procedatur contemptis ambobus contendentibus, ad electionem unius per communem sensum totius Concilii approbantis et roborantis illud quod duo de Collegio Dominorum Cardinalium aut eorum pars magna et sanior constituerint. » Another tract : *De auferibilitate Papae ab Ecclesiae*, was written during the Council of Pisa, carried the argument that if a Pope could resign his position, then the Church could force him to resign.

of affairs so harmful to the interests of religion should persist (1). Therefore it was permissible to take steps to make the Papacy what it was intended to be by Christ.

The Council of Pisa acted upon this presumption of power, and although the German delegation left the city rather than have part in an assembly whose authority was dubious and which was patently under French domination (2), Popes Gregory and Benedict were declared to be deposed on the 5th of June, 1409. Less than two weeks later, after the French had been unsuccessful in their effort to elect one of their number, Peter Philarghi, better known as Peter of Candia was declared by the Cardinals of both Obediences to be the choice of the Council of Pisa for the Papacy (3). Gerson rejoiced when he heard the news of the election, and his hopes ran forward to embrace the phantom of the union of the Eastern and Western Churches. With the intention of stimulating such a movement he addressed sermons to the newly elected Pontiff, and to the King of France (4). But his joy and his project were premature. Far from securing the peace of the Church, the Council of Pisa had only aggravated the trouble. It weakened for a time the claims and the following of Gregory and Benedict, but many were doubtful as to the right and the authority of the Council and not willing to accept its settlement. So that when the excitement of the moment had passed, and men took time for

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(1) II, 115 : « Unitas Ecclesiae ad unum Christi vicarium non habet necesse quod nunc procuretur, servando terminos literales, aut ceremoniales jurium positivorum,... sed summarie et de bona grossaque aequitate potest procedere Concilium istud generale, in quo residebit sufficiens auctoritas judicialis utendi epikeia, id est interpretandi omnia jura positiva, et ad finem celeriorem et salubriorem habendae unionis eadem adaptandi. »

(2) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, pp. 13-18. Malatesta, Prince of Rimini, who had come to Pisa in the interest of his friend Gregory XII warned the Council that they would have three Popes instead of two unless they paid more heed to the titles of Gregory and Benedict.

(3) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, pp. 54-58.

(4) II, 131-141 : *Sermo factus in die Ascensionis coram Alexandro.* II, 141-153 : *Sermo factus coram Rege Franciae.* Despite the title of the first named sermon, it was not delivered before Alexander, since Gerson was not at Pisa. Gerson wrote it and sent it off to Pisa, to remind the new Pope of the necessity of reform. Cfr Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 243.; Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, p. 59.

calm judgment, they found themselves faced with the embarrassing necessity of choosing between three claimants for the dignity of the Papacy.

The doctrine of the Church on the matter of Councils has always been that the Pope as Supreme Head of Christianity has the sole right to summon a Council and that his consent is necessary before any decree issued from a General Council can bind the whole body of the faithful. Whereas he alone can determine matters of Faith and Morals, the Council has no authority in these fields, unless indirectly. The Papal authority is thus absolute in its own sphere (1).

Under the stress of the Schism, however, theologians began to cast about for some formula that would enable them to bring a solution to the problem. As early as Occam's day it was no uncommon thing to belittle the power of the Pope, in temporal affairs especially, when he seemed to be so much at the beck of the King of France (2). The revolutionary ideas that were rampant then had ample chance to develop half a century later when some went so far as to deny the divine institution of the Primacy of the Pope, or to declare that whether there were one Pope or ten made little difference (3). Less extreme, perhaps, but certainly much more influential than this point of view was the theory which was sponsored by Henry of Langenstein in the year 1381. In his *Concilium Pacis*, he advocated the calling of a General Council as the best means to secure the union and the reform of the Church (4). The principle from which he worked was that of *salus populi suprema lex esto*. The good of all the people, for whom all the institutions in the Church exist, demands that there be at the Head of Christianity a Pope who should administer to the wants of all. It also demands that his power be subject to censure, and that in the event of his administration proving harmful to the Church he should be removed from office. The precise

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(1) S. Harent *Infaillibité pontificale*, article in the *Dict. Ap. de la Foi cath.*, III cols 1424-1434 ; Pastòr, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 193.

(2) Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, pp. 92 ff.

(3) Schwab, *o. c.*, pp, 122-123 ; Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 196.

(4) II, 809-840 : *Henrici de Langenstein de Hassia, Concilium Pacis : de unione ac reformatione Ecclesiae in concilio universali quaerenda.*

case to which Langenstein would apply his teaching was that of the Schism. Only a General Council, as the expression of the will of all the faithful, would avail to solve the difficulty. For, said Langenstein, « the authority of the General Council is greater than that of the Pope or of the Cardinals » (1). That the Council could not be convened by order of a Pope did not, to Langenstein's mind, offer any difficulty. In such a case as that of Schism it was impossible to observe scrupulously all the points of the law. Since the law was for the welfare of the people it should not be made a means of oppressing them, so there had to be some way open whereby the wounds of the Church could be healed. That way was to be the *via concilii*(2).

This theory of Langenstein had great popularity, despite the fact that it was a complete break with the usage of the past. As long as there was hope that the Schism might he arranged by Cession or by Compromise, Gerson had resisted such opinions although he was perfectly well aware of their import. Not until the year 1404 do we find any reference to the theory of the General Council in his writings, and then it was only by way of a threat that he advocated a Council as the best way to settle the Schism. For the declaration was made in the presence of Pope Benedict XIII whom Gerson had been trying to persuade to resign of his own volition, and he was by no means sure of the authority of the Council at that time (3). It was really not until 1409 that he advocated the Conciliar Theory as the one means to secure peace and union (4). Others

(1) II, 824 : « Universalis Ecclesia, cujus Concilium generale est representativum, est superior Collegium Cardinalium, et omni alia particulari Congregatione fidelium, et omni cujuscumque dignitatis,... etiam Domino Papa, in casibus inferius exprimendis. » Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, pp. 197-198.

(2) The principle invoked by Langenstein was what is called by theologians *epikeia*. Where the application of a law would cause difficulties not intended by the lawgiver, an interpretation must be made of the law. Cfr II, 831-832, A. Von der Hardt, *Magnum oecumenicum Constantiense Concilium*, tome II, pp. 3 ff. Schwab, *o. c.*, pp. 121-124.

(3) II, 73 : « Consequenter deducimus, quod propter timorem succumbendi aut inhonorationis humanae, quae utique vitiosa non sunt, Concilium generale universalis Ecclesiae non videtur repudiandum ; sed pium est credere quod in tractatione praesentis materiae non erraret. »

(4) II, 114 : « Unitas Ecclesiastica... non est retardanda, propter allegationes quasdam ex juribus positivis sumptas contra celebrationem Concilii generalis, aut viam cessionis : ut quod Concilium non potest celebrare sine autoritate Papae. »

of his time were reaching the same conclusion, driven as they were from one expedient to another, and d'Ailly, Zabarella, Falkenberg and Thierry of Nieheim created centers of influence in France, Italy, Bohemia and Germany (1). All of these men were won to the viewpoint that the sole remedy for the troubles of the time was to be found in a General Council, which would be the expression of the will of the whole Church. Of all their writings however, the tract written by Thierry of Nieheim on *The Means to Unite and Reform the Church by a General Council* had the greatest appeal and the most influence (2). He appealed to the Holy Roman Emperor as the one from whom most was expected. As long as the Emperor did not respond to his obligation to foster the peace of the Church, as long as he failed to live up to his title of Oecumenical Prince the Schism was sure to persist. The will of the faithful, expressed in a General Council was the highest expression of authority in the Church and the Pope was bound to accept the decrees of the Council, even were it to declare him deposed. Because the welfare of the whole is greater than that of the individual, the claim of the whole Church for peace had to be placed before the titles of the three rivals in the Papacy (3).

The teaching of Nieheim, bold as it was, was no more than a reflection of the ideas that were being broached in the market-place as well as in the pulpits after the Council of Pisa.

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(1) Salembier, *Le grand schisme d'Occident*, p. 244 ; Pastor, *o. c*, vol. I, pp. 201-210.

(2) II, 161-201. This work has been for long attributed to Gerson. Most of the so-called Gallican tendencies of Gerson depend upon this tract, it having been the conviction of his critics that he was the author of the work that is now generally admitted to be from Nieheim. Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 207. However, Hauck, *o. c.*, vol. V, p. 953, is not certain that Nieheim was the author of the *De Modis Uniendi.*

(3) II, 178 : « Sed quia res de facili redit ad suam naturam, dici potest, quousque non erit aliquis justus, strenuus et catholicus Imperator, vel Rex Romanorum, qui per potentiam coactivam,... efficaciter apponat, verisimiliter schismata ipsa, nedum perdurabunt, sed et timendum est quod vires assumant. » II, 172 : « Tali enim Concilio ipse Papa in omnibus tenetur obedire ; tale Concilium potest potestatem Papae limitare, quia tali Concilio, cum representet Ecclesiam universalem, claves ligandi et solvendi sunt concessae ; tale Concilium potest jura Papalia tollere, a tali Concilio nullus potest appellare, tale Concilium potest Papam eligere. privare et deponere, etc. »

The Emperor Sigismund was not slow to respond to the appeal, and began with remarkable diligence to prepare for a Council. By a fortunate turn of events, the lot of Pope John XXIII was cast into the hands of the Emperor who made his support contingent upon the willingness of the Pontiff to convoke a General Council in the city of Constance, in the year 1414 (1). Driven to the wall, and with no chance of escape, John consented and agreed to be present at the Council. He was hopeful that the new gathering might be made to support the decisions of the Council of Pisa, and help him overcome the opposition of both Gregory and Benedict (2). But in the years that had lapsed since the election of the Pisan Pope in 1409, opinions had undergone a substantial change and many of those who at first hailed the decisions of the Council of Pisa as a Godsend came finally to think of them as a new affliction for the Church. Most of the men who assembled in Constance refused to consider the claims of John XXIII to the Papacy as any better than those of his opponents (3).

It was late in the month of February when Gerson arrived at the Head of the French delegation (4). So great were the difficulties attending the arrangement of the programme for the Council that in the three months that had lapsed since the official opening, but one General Session had been held (5).

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(1) Ladislaus, King of Naples, had taken, and pillaged the city of Rome in June, 1413. Pope John turned to the Emperor for protection against his brutal enemy, and sent Zabarella as his legate to the Court of the Emperor. It was not easy to persuade John to accept Constance as the city for the Council, and only because of his continued misfortunes did he consent, and issue on the 9th of December, 1413, the summons to convene. Sigismund had sent out word more than a month previously.

(2) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, pp. 105, 176-178, 186; Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome II, col. 196-201.

(3) Valois, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 263 ff.; Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, p. 181.

(4) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, p. 188.

(5) The First Session of the Council had been held on November 16th, 1414. While the Council awaited the arrival of the Emperor, attention was given to drawing up a plan of procedure. Then in January 1415, projects for the reform were submitted, and the plan of voting by Nations instead of by head was launched. This was plainly directed against the strength of John XXIII and the Italian representation and was passed by the votes of the Germans, French and English. The principle of the vote by Nations was inspired by the Universities and had already been in use at Pisa and at Rome.

The influence of John XXIII was on the wane, and he had, somewhat charily, consented to the popular demand and issued a statement of his willingness to resign his post for the good of the Church. This declaration was read by Zabarella before a general assembly held on the 16th of February, two days before the arrival of Gerson (1). But John was not sincere, nor was his declaration such as would inspire confidence. The Council rightly suspected his activity and knew that he was trying to win new and powerful adherents to his cause (2). On the insistence of the Emperor, and the reiterated demands of the Council, John came in person to a general assembly, held on the 1st of March, and read a formula drawn up by the Council, and on the 7th of the same month he issued a Bull (*Pacis bonum*) which contained an official declaration of his willingness to resign, for the peace of the Church (3). Not more than two weeks after this solemn promise and despite the assurance which he had given the Emperor that he would not leave Constance until the dissolution of the Council, the city awoke one day in dismay to hear that John had fled.

Were it not for the generalship of Sigismund, the Council would have been abandoned, then and there. Many of the merchant class already had begun to pack their effects and leave the city, and the clerics were beginning to follow their example when the Emperor got affairs in hand. He called for a general assembly of all the Nations to convene immediately and declared his determination to sustain the Council. He tried to break down the scruples of the many Cardinals who had separated from the Council once John departed, and he announced an important meeting of the whole Council for the 23rd of March (4). At the request of the Emperor, Gerson was to address the assembly.

Gerson did not mistake the role that he had to play. He had

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(1) Von der Hardt, o. c., tome II, col. 223.; Hefele-Leclercq, o. c., vol. VII, p. 188; Valois, o. c., vol. IV, p. 272 ff.

(2) Hefele-Leclercq, o. c., vol. VII, pp. 105, 189; Valois, o. c., vol. IV, p. 279; Hauck, o. c., vol V, p. 991.

(3) Von der Hardt, o. c., tome IV, pp. 53 ff.; Hefele-Leclercq, o. c., vol. VII, p. 191.

(4) Pastor, o. c., vol. I, p. 211; Hefele-Leclercq, o. c., vol. VII, pp. 198 ff.

to strike a note of conviction and give courage to those were seeing their fondest hopes vanish, and the vista of union and reform fade before their eyes. The College of Cardinals, fearing that their office and that of the Papacy was to be attacked in the address, stayed away from the assembly (1). But though the conclusions of Gerson were unorthodox, and guided more by considerations of expediency than of tradition, his argument was calm and well reasoned, and not at all the violent outburst that was attended. He reiterated his stand of 1409 that the General Council as the expression of the will of the whole Church must be heard by all, the Pope included. « Though it cannot destroy the plenitude of the Papal power, the General Council can none the less place certain limits about it, for the good of the Church (2). » To quiet the consciences of his hearers who were torn between their desires and their fears he declared that in circumstances such as the Schism a General Council could assemble without the consent of the Pope, and that whatever ruling such an assembly should make for the good of the Church must be accepted by the Pope (3).

The fears of the Council were soon dissipated and, being secure in the support of the Emperor, the Nations took up again the feverish discussion of the problems of the Council, while John XXIII tried by devious ways to break down their morale (4). In a reunion of the German, the French and the English Nations held on the 29th of March, (Good Friday) four

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(1) Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome IV, p. 66 : « Ast non comparuerunt, scrupulos praetextentes. » Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 507.

(2) II, 205 : « Ecclesia vel generale Concilium quamvis non potest tollere plenitudinem potestatis Papalis a Christo supernaturaliter et misericorditer collatae, potest tamen usum ejus limitare sub certis regulis ac legibus in aedificationem ecclesiae. »

(3) II, 205 : « Ecclesia vel generale Concilium potuit et potest congregari sine expressu consensu vel mandato Papae etiam rite electi et viventis in multis casibus. »

(4) Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome II, col. 253-263, recounts all the measures taken by the Pope to interfere with the proceedings at Constance, how he summoned his Cardinals, sent letters of expostulation to the different Monarchs and to the University of Paris, protesting against the injustices he had to suffer. Mansi, *Amplissima Coll. Concil.*, tome XXVII, col. 578 ff.; tome XXVIII, col. 12. ; Valois, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 286.

famous propositions were passed which showed the influence of Gerson's address. It was declared that the Oecumenical Council that was assembled at Constance held its authority directly from God, and that the Pope as well as the rest of the faithful was bound to obey it in all that concerned the Faith and the extinction of the Schism. At the demand of Gerson, the assembly manifested its disapproval of the flight of the Pope from the city of Constance and declared that he thereby made himself suspect of favoring the Schism (1). These articles were opposed by the Cardinals whose influence was beginning to modify the demands of the assembly, when word came that Pope John had again fled away, and that he had retracted all of the declarations he had hitherto made at Constance on the ground that they had been extorted from him (2). The Fifth General Session which met on the 6th of April, in the presence of seven of the Cardinals, approved of all of the declarations which had been passed in the reunion of the Nations the week before (3). So the Council of Constance thus declared for the supremacy of the Council over the Pope. How much share Gerson had in the development of that theme we have already seen. It is sad that his reputation for orthodoxy which up till that moment had been so fine should have been the means of launching an error that was to cause trouble to the Church during three Centuries. True, the error can be explained, the sources of the teaching can be traced and Gerson may be exonerated to a degree. Had some strong personality not stood out in the moment of uncertainty, the determination of the members of the Council might have been broken, the assembly disbanded and the Schism perpetuated. By the persistency of their effort the members of the Council finally broke down the determination of John XXIII, and tired of his wanderings, and with not a friend powerful enough to defend him he yielded to the decree of deposition that was issued at the Twelfth General Session of the Council, May 29th 1415 (4).

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(1) Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome IV, pp. 69 ff.; Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, pp. 211 ff.

(2) Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome II, col. 400; tome IV, p. 84.

(3) *Ibid.*, tome IV, pp. 96 ff.; Mansi, *o. c.*, tome XXVII, col. 705 ff.; Valois, *o. c.*, vol. IV, pp. 269-300.

(4) Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome IV, col. 280-285.

Gregory XII had meanwhile risen to the height of greatness and sent Maletesta as his personal representative with plenipotentiary powers, and on the 4th of July, in the name of the successor of Urban VI, Maletesta declared the Council convened, and submitted Gregory's resignation to the assembly (1). The import of his action cannot be overlooked. This was the real beginning of the Council of Constance.

The question of the union of the Church had thus reached a practical settlement. But meantime projects of reform had been taken up, and Gerson had busied himself for some time with the problems of the Hussite heresy, and the condemnation of John Petit (2). Although anyone of the members of the Council would have protested vigorously his conviction as to the necessity of a reform, personal interests dulled the keenness of the effort that most of them gave to resolve the problem. Again, the system of voting by Nations, while it expedited matters and saved heated discussions, had the inevitable result of pitching one Nation against another and rousing all of the hatreds and suspicions that had grown traditional amongst them (3). The fact that France sponsored a certain project was sufficient reason for the English delegation to oppose it. Positive measures became thus very difficult, and the solution that had finally to be adopted was a system of Concordats for the separate nations (4). Many were the voices that were raised in favor of reform, — voices especially of the religious and theologians. With them the reform became the chief theme of all the preaching (5). The Papal Curia, and the benefice system had to bear the brunt of criticism and

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(1) *Ibid.*, tome IV, pp. 192, 340-382.

(2) His friend d'Ailly was Head of the commission appointed to examine the doctrines of Hus and to test his orthodoxy. Many Doctors were appointed to assist the judges, and Gerson was prominent amongst these.

(3) Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 219.

(4) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, pp. 529 ff.

(5) Finke, *Acta Concilii Constanciensis*, vol. II, p. 380 : « Das Hauptthema der Predigten ist die Reform der Kirche. » These sermons on reform, began after June 24, 1415 when Zabaralla spoke on the matter. The reform sermons were preached by religious, such as de Rocha, O. F. M., Vaquer, O. Carm., Zachary, O. Erem., etc. Cfr Finke, *o. c.*, pp. 414 ff.

against these institutions the bulk of the legislation was to be leveled.

For the rest, we may study the activity of the Council in the career of Gerson there. He, no more than the rest, was satisfied with the condition of the Curia, although he made less noise about it than many others. The most positive criticism that we have attributed to Gerson in the Council of Constance is not at all his own work, but an excerpt which was made from the writings of Henry of Langenstein (1). Most of his preaching and writing was in answer to the request of the Council. Thus, he was one of a Commission appointed to examine the question of the canonization of Bridget of Sweden, and he made this the occasion for a tract on *Proving Spirits* (2). The revelations and the visions of Saint Bridget had been remarkable in themselves, but they had given spur to numerous visionaries whose number made it imperative that some precautionary measures be taken to prevent the religion of the people from becoming a cult of the preternatural. The decisions that Gerson made were both apt and impersonal.

Not so with the other controversies in which he was to take part. Against the heresy of John Hus he waged a bitter contest, and was one of the most persistent opponents of the Czech as we have seen (3). When, after the condemnation and the death of Hus, the heresy did not subside but grew to greater and more fearful proportions, the assistance of Gerson was enlisted again and he was asked to compose a tract to contradict the errors that were winning many adherents in Prague. This was the occasion for the *Tract against the Heresy of the Communion under both Species, for Laypeople* (4). The tract reiterates the stand which Gerson had taken at an earlier date against the teaching of Hus (5). He urged charity in dealing with the heretics, but at the same time advocated that appeal be made to the Emperor as the defender of orthodoxy,

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(1) II, 314-318. This was a sharp criticism of Prelates and clergy.

(2) I, 37-43 : *De probatione spirituum*, written Aug. 28th 1415.

(3) Chapter VII, p. 123.

(4) I, 457-467 : *Tractatus contra haeresim de Communione laicorum sub utraque specie.*

(5) I, 463 : « Debet potius hoc sacrum generale Concilium invocare auxilium brachii saecularis si opus fuerit. »

if the heretics did not desist in their error. This declaration perhaps more than anything else was what inspired the Archduke of Austria to invite Gerson to his Imperial City of Vienna to lecture in the University against the doctrines of the Hussites, the spread of whose ideas were much feared in the Empire.

Before he left Paris to proceed to the Council of Constance, Gerson was charged by the King to uphold before the assembly, in the event of an appeal being made by Burgundy, the decision of the Council of Paris against the doctrine of Tyrannicide (1). It is possible that Gerson's impetuous nature ran away with him on this point, and when in April there was talk of Burgundy giving shelter and protection to Pope John XXIII who was at the time a fugitive from the Council, he revived the old controversy as a means of keeping the Duke alert to the danger that he would incur if he showed sympathy to John (2). At any rate, — whatever be the cause of the renewal of hostilities between the forces of the Duke and Gerson, — on the 15th of May, the former demanded that the Council or the Holy See examine the sentences issued by the Archbishop of Paris, and on the 26th of the same month a statement of the Duke of Burgundy was read to the assembly. He protested that it was only a few persons and « those of the lower classes who attacked his honor, more through hatred than in the interest of the Faith (3) ». This attack was plainly directed against Gerson, and he was quick to answer it. On the 7th of June he appealed to the judgment of the Council. Martin Porée, who was Bishop of Arras, and Pierre Cauchon, at that time director of the temporal interests of the Archbishop of Rheims, took up cudgels for the Duke of Burgundy. The decision that was handed down by the Commission com-

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(1) Actually a truce had been made between the contending factions and the directions which Gerson received were to the effect that he keep from taking the initiative in the matter, before the Council of Constance.

(2) Valois, *o. c.*, vol. IV, pp. 315-319.

(3) V, 343-346 : *Letter of the Duke of Burgundy to the Fathers of the Council of Constance.* Mansi, o. c., tome XXVII col. 710 ; tome XXVIII, col. 740. The charge against Gerson was unjust. He had tried all manner of persuasion on John of Burgundy. IV. 677-680, shows Gerson's intention, and V, 99, mentions the many direct appeals he had made to Burgundy himself.

posed of Cardinals d'Ailly, Zabarella and Orsini was not specific enough to be satisfactory to either party, although to the chagrin of Burgundy it condemned the doctrine of Tyrannicide (1).

In the summer of the same year Gerson wrote against the practice of simony. Simultaneously, he was working on a smaller tract which was meant to worry the Bishop of Arras who was always protesting his own orthodoxy (2), the while he sustained attacks against the correctness of Gerson's views. Then in October, he preached on two occasions against the teachings of John Petit (3). It must not be thought that Gerson was pressing the point too far, and that he was not willing to let the quarrel die. Actually the cause of this new protest from him was that the Bishop of Arras had become bolder and was declaring that the decision of the Commission in no way affected his master. A Franciscan Father, John Rocca, made a study of the writings of Gerson and drew from them a list of twenty-five propositions which he claimed to be heretical (4). Gerson was called upon the give an account of himself and the examination weakened his prestige not a little even though he was not condemned. The Bishop of Arras had meanwhile profitted by the discomfiture of his adversary and appealed to a Commission of eighty theologians and canonists against the decision of the Council of Paris, and on the 15th of January 1416 a opinion was given in favor of the assertions of John Petit (5). The riches of Burgundy had been quite instru-

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(1) This Commission was appointed in the Thirteenth General Session to investigate all questions of heresy. The Burgundians protested against the appointment of d'Ailly since he was a friend of Gerson, but their protest was overruled. Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome IV, p. 335; Mansi, *o. c.*, tome XXVII, col. 729.

(2) I, 28-36 : *De protestatione circa materia Fidei.* Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome III, 39 ff.

(3) II, 330-338 : *Sermon on Errors against Faith and Morals with relation to the Precept : Thou shalt not Kill.* This sermon was preached in Oct. 18th, 1415. II, 338-349 : *Sermon against the Assertions of John Petit,* preached Oct. 20th, 1415. Cfr Finke, *Acta Concilii Constanciensis,* vol. II, p. 423.

(4) V, 500-507 : *Judgment of the deputies of the Council.* V, 439-444 : *Assertions made in the works of Gerson, submitted by the Bishop of Arras.* V, 445-450 : *Gerson's Defense.* V, 451-472 : *John of Rocha attacks the evasions of Gerson.* Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome IV, p. 720.

(5) Mansi, *o. c.*, tome XXVII, col. 876.

mental in bringing conviction to the learned Doctors, and Gerson did not forget to tell them so in his next speech which occurred on the 5th of May (1). Under the title of calumnies he refuted the charges of the Bishop of Arras, and in a peroration that teems with force and feeling he addressed an appeal to the Bishop and to the Council. « I address myself to you, Venerable Father and Lord Bishop of Arras ! I feel deeply for you, having never had anything but love for you, and with God's help I will continue to love you. Let me ask you one question and beg you to answer. If you do not do so, then I will answer for you. Do you not seek the temporal and the spiritual welfare of your lord, the Duke of Burgundy ? You do, I am sure. Do you not wish the continuance of his dynasty ? I know you do. Do you not believe that the Duke was wrongly advised and that his father Philip would never have permitted such an act ? But if the crime is wrong, how much worse is it to defend it ? May you be moved by the truth, right reason, and real piety for the sake of your soul's welfare (2). » But neither could the Bishop be moved from his rigid « fidelity » to John of Burgundy, nor would the Council issue a more specific condemnation than had been given. Hardly more than two years later the Dauphin of France was to take justice into his own hands and by his orders John of Burgundy was to be waylaid and assassinated.

Meantime, Peter de Luna, Benedict XIII, remained obdurate to the demands of the Council and the Emperor and refused to resign his claims to the Papacy (3). But delegates had arrived

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(1) II, 326 : « Dico quod si materia stetisset in puris terminis theologicis, tractando eam stilo theologico,... non opus fuisset introducere Regis auctoritatem. Nunc autem, dum res tractata est, et tractata per advocatos et procuratores, et notarios et per strepitum, et figuram judicii sensit adversa pars, credite, sensimus et nos, quod divitibus et divitiis opus erat. »

(2) II, 328 : Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome IV, col. 726.

(3) The Emperor had left Constance on the 18th of July 1415 for a conference with the King of Aragon and with Benedict. After Benedict had refused flatly to resign his position, the Princes of the Peninsula met with Sigismund on the 13th of December, 1415 and drew up a Concordat providing for the admittance of the Cardinals of Benedict to the Council of Constance. Mansi, *o. c.*, tome XXVII, col. 811 ; tome XXVIII, cols 224-240, 251 : *Capitula Narbonensia Concordata.*

from Aragon, and a fifth Nation (Spain) received a voice in the general assemblies of the Nations. The Twenty-third Session held on November 5th, 1416, was given to the preparation for the ecclesiastical trial of Benedict. A Commission was appointed to hear the accusations against him, and amongst those who attacked the authority of Benedict was Gerson (1). The Council proceeded slowly, and only on the 26th of July, 1417, in the Thirty-seventh Session was he condemned and declared deprived of all authority (2).

This done, the Council was free to turn all of its attention to the question of the reform. The desire of the German Nation was that it do so before proceeding to the choice of a Pontiff, but the other Nations favored an election so that reformatory measures could be arranged by the new Pope in concord with the Council (3). There was, for a time, a tendency to deprive the Cardinals of their prerogative of choosing the Pope, but it was finally decided that a conclave composed of twenty-three Cardinals and thirty representativcs of the Council, six for each Nation, — be entrusted with the task (4). On the 8th of November, the Emperor presided at the opening of the conclave and received from the electors the promise that they would choose a virtuous man, and one capable of reforming the Church. Then began the discussion and the Scrutinies, while soldiers watched from without. For three days there was a deadlock, as the German Nation matched determination with the French and the Spanish Nations. Each held out for one of

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(1) II, 293-297 : This tract was written after Benedict refused the invitation of the Council to come in person to defend his claims to the Papacy. Gerson in his indignation accuses the Pontiff of heresy in that he sinned against the profession of Faith in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Cfr also, II, 297-302.

(2) Mansi, *o. c.*, tome XXVII, col. 1121-1146 ; Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome IV, col. 1367-1377 : *Dejectio Petri de Luna* ; Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, pp. 439-442.

(3) Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome IV, col. 1419 : *Protestatio nationis Germaniae contra electionem Papae.* The French, Italian and Spanish Nations declared that the first reform to look to was to correct the situation of a Church with no Head. Sigismund opposed the view that asked for an immediate election, but he had to bow before the will of the Cardinals; Hefele-Leclerq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, pp. 453 ff.

(4) Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome IV, pp. 1461-1481 ; Mansi, *o. c.*, tome XXVII, col. 1165.

their number. Each hoped lo turn the election to the profit of their own land. But on the 11th of November, the Germans threw their votes to Cardinal Colonna (Martin V) to whom went almost immediately the tide of victory (1).

Immediately after the coronation of the new Pontiff, the Emperor and the Nations besought him to look to the reform. But the interests of Italy, Spain and England were quite in opposition to those of France and Germany so it became impossible to make a general ruling on the matter. Again, individuals might protest their desire to reform the Church, but in the minds of few was there willingness to yield their own privileges. In theory, benefices were limited, direct measures were taken to prevent simony and non-residence, but these were as good as dead letter to the ecclesiastics, since there were few who observed the restrictions. Most of the reforms aimed at the Cardinals, and tried to limit the income of the Curia. In the final conclusion of the affair it was decided to leave the question of the reform in the hands of the Pope, with whom the separate countries were to arrange their Concordats (2).

As the Council neared its conclusion, Gerson was drawn into two controversies, one of which revived the doctrine of Tyrannicide. A German Dominican, John of Falkenberg, had written, at the instigation of the Knights of the Teutonic Order, a diatribe against the King of Poland, in which he stated that it was permissible to kill the King and to wage war against his subjects (3). The matter had been brought to the attention of the Council, but while the Nations had taken pains to ex-

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(1) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, p. 478. Leclercq objects to the interpretation made by Hefele, declaring that the opposition made by the Germans was against any French candidature. But the fact is that the French were the last to vote as a Nation for Colonna.

(2) Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome I, col. 419-423 (Suggestions made by d'Ailly for the Reform); Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, pp. 484-504, 529-564.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 505. Falkenberg had taken part in the defense of Burgundy. Cfr V, 1013-1032. Falkenberg was required to retract later when Pope Martin summoned him to Rome. The Grand Master of the Teutonic Order was too sparing in rewarding the zeal of Falkenberg and so became the object of a tract more violent if anything than that written against the King of Poland. Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, p. 568.

amine the question, and had condemned the work of Falkenberg to the flames, no action was taken, since the opposition was too strong (1). Gerson united with the Poles and became their spokesman before Martin V (2). But his effort was futile. The Pope charged the Poles to silence their claims, and when they declared that they appealed to a future Council, he issued a Bull (March 10th, 1418) in which he stated that there was no appeal from a Papal decision (3). The Poles, however, could not hide their chagrin, nor were they thus to be baffled if they could help it. On the day set for the official closing of the Council, April 22nd 1418, they appealed again to the Council for the condemnation of the teaching of Falkenberg (4). A tumult of protest was raised against them. Martin V, plainly under the influence of the Teutonic Order, sustained the opposition and blocked the efforts of the Poles. The injustice of this action hurt Gerson and on the same day, or shortly after the Council disbanded, he wrote a tract entitled : *Is it Licit in matters of Faith to appeal from the Decision of the Sovereign Pontiff ?* (5). The motive of Gerson was just. But the principles that he evoked were based on the unfortunate decrees of the Third and Fifth Sessions of the Council and his conclusions were wrong (6). It was a pity, however, that expe-

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(1) Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tôme IV, p. 1091.

(2) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, pp. 505-506 ; Gerson, *Opera*, VI, 389-390.

(3) Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome IV, pp. 1531-1533.

(4) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, p. 567 ; Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome IV, pp. 1555-1558; Mansi, *o. c.*, tome XXVII, col. 1202.

(5) II, 303-308 : *Quomodo et an liceat in causis Fidei a summo Pontifice appellare seu ejus judicium declinare.* Another tract written while Gerson was in Germany reviewed the controversy and charged those who opposed the condemnation with double-dealing, II, 386-292.

(6) II, 303 : « Arguitur in oppositum (i. e. in contradiction to the claims of Martin V) primo auctoritate determinationis sive constitutionis generalis Concilii Constantiensis : quae determinatio multipliciter facta est, et practicata, et specialiter in Sessione publica, celebrata die 6 Aprilis anno 1415. » II, 307 : « In causis Fidei non habetur in terra Judex infallibilis,... praeter ipsam Ecclesiam Universalem, vel Concilium generale eam sufficienter representans. » « In causis Fidei nullus particularis homo per suam determinationem potest de propositione non haeretica facere haereticam; ita nec Papa nec Episcopus, proprie et vere loquendo, possunt propositionem aliquam haereticare. » « In causis Fidei, sicut potest declinari judicium Episcopi, si appareat devius a Fide, et requiri

diency rather than considerations of justice should have guided the decision of Martin V ; for it was not to be long before the teaching of Tyrannicide found many exponents at the Courts of the Medici and Sforza as well as in France and Germany.

Another controversy in which Gerson was asked to take a hand was that waged against an exaggerated concept of the religious life fostered and preached by the Dominican Matthew Grabon, and directed against the Brethren of the Common Life (1). Already in the time of Groote, there had been a wave of objection directed against them, which Groote tried to counter by adopting the Rule of St. Augustine of his community (2). But Grabon held that the mode of life of the Brethren was inadmissible, in that it was neither the life of the religious in the great congregations, nor like the life of the simple faithful. Those who live in the world should not renounce the goods of the world as these men had done, and those who take upon themselves the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience must belong to some one of the great Religious Orders (3). Gerson attacked this bit of intolerance. The idea of binding up the whole Christian religion in the practice of the monastic life and teaching that the true religion was to be realized in the monasteries alone was false. The only Christian religion is that preached by Christ, to which all are called, and wherein all may become perfect even without vows. Gerson called upon the Pope and Cardinals to condemn the teaching

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judicium Papae ; sic de Papa respectu generalis Concilii. » There were many who took the decisions of the Third, Fourth and Fifth General Sessions of Constance as suitable only for the emergency. Gerson was afraid of a recurrence of the evil, and considered that some Court of Appeal had to be provided to save the Church from a like scandal. This marks the furthest departure of Gerson from orthodoxy. The tract is the fruit of controversy, and was written in a moment of tense indignation against Martin V who refused to permit further discussion of the question of Tyrannicide.

(1) Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome III, pp. 107-121 ; Mansi, *o. c.*, tome XXVIII, col. 386-394.

(2) Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 165.

(3) I, 470-474 : *Conclusions of Frater Matthew Grabon*,. I, 471 : « Nullus potest licite et meritorie, immo nec veraciter obedientiae, paupertatis et castitatis universalia consilia conjunctum extra veras Religiones manendo adimplere. »

of Grabon before it could do harm (1). Fortunately, the friar saw his error and retracted (2). A century later, however, Melanchthon and the adherents of Luther appealed to this tract of Gerson as an authority in their contest against the Religious Orders. It was a shameful misrepresentation of the views of a man who had nothing but sympathy for the ideal of the monastic life, and the appeal which Gerson made for tolerance became in the hands of the Reformers a charter of intolerance (3).

Now at the end of three years of deliberation the Council was to disband. The members had tired of bitter warring and were ready to depart. It was trusted that the Concordats would solve for the moment the problems of reform, and a special arrangement was made between each nation and the Pope. With France, Martin V was particularly generous (4). But France had been trained in the long period of the Avignon Captivity and the Western Schism to govern, more or less directly, the affairs of the Church and was particularly tempted to keep the resources of the national Church at the disposition of the Crown. In the Royal Ordonnances of March and April, 1418, it was ruled that in future when benefices became vacant no recourse was to be had to the system of expectatives, nor was any money to leave the country during the vacancies

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(1) I, 467-470 : *Gerson's criticism of the assertions of Grabon.* I, 467 : « Sola Religio Christiana est proprie, vere et autonomatice dicenda Religio. Religio Christiana non obligat ad observantiam consiliorum. Religio Christiana potest absque voto obligante ad Consilia perfecte, immo perfectissime observare. » I, 469 : « Sequiter quinto quod Dominus noster Papa,... et similiter sui Cardinales et Praelati debent celeriter opera dare, quod talis doctrina, pestifera et blasphema ac injuriosa eis, extirpetur judicialiter et publice ne serpat in majorem perniciem. »

(2) Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome III, 118-121. Hefele-Leclercq, vol. VII, p. 566.

(3) Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. III, p. 102, note 4, pp. 116-119.

(4) Salembier, *o. c.*, p. 385. Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, p. 557, quotes the decrees of the General Reform approved by the Pope, which show an exception made for the French : « Sanctissimus dominus noster, pensatis guerrarum cladibus atque variis dispendiis, quibus, proh dolor ! regnum Franciae his temporibus concutitur : pio ei compatiens affectu, non vult nec intendit levari seu percipi ultra medietatem fructuum primi anni ». Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome IV, p. 1566.

of Episcopal Sees (1). The government also manifested an uncertainty as to whether it should recognize Pope Martin V. For a moment there was tenseness. Was France about to throw discord into the Church once more ? The Pope resented such an answer to his clemency. Happily, the University of Paris took a positive stand and sent off the list of *supplicia* to Constance, and the Duke of Burgundy who had newly acquired the position of dictator was anxious to erase the bad impression he had created by the defense of Tyrannicide. He declared for the Concordat, and forced Charles VI, then in the last stages of his folly, to sign a decree which abrogated the previous Ordonnances (2).

But though the accession of Burgundy to power was a good thing for France and the Church, it boded no good for Gerson. On April 22nd, the last Session of the Council of Constance was held. A decree of dissolution was read by Cardinal de Chalant (3). The assembly approved, and a representative of the Emperor rose to express the gratitude of his lord to the members of the Council, and his devotion to the Holy See. Three weeks later the Pope left Constance, on the 21st of May the Emperor set out also, leaving behind him very few of the thousands that had gathered for the Council, unless it be the merchants and the bankers whose goods he had used but could not pay for (4). Gerson saw his friends depart for France whither he could not go, and with a heavy heart he turned his steps to the East, to the Valley of the Danube. We have from him a letter that was written to his brothers on the 10th of August, from the town of Neuberg in Bavaria (5). It would appear that efforts were being made to permit his return to France. The Dauphin, who was acting the part of King

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(1) Valois, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 416 ; Salembier, *o. c.*, pp. 386-387. An attempt was made to revive a decree which had been drawn up in 1407, against Benedict XIII. The chief preoccupation of the French Crown and Parliament was to keep the revenues from ecclesiastical benefices within the country.

(2) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, p. 560 ; Salembier, *o. c.*, p. 387.

(3) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, p. 566 ; Von der Hardt, *o. c.*, tome IV, p. 1559.

(4) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, p. 571.

(5) Gence, *Jean Gerson restitué et expliqué par lui-même*, Paris, 1836, pp. 34 ff.

was willing to aid, but he had no strength to cope with the wrath of Burgundy. In his letter, Gerson tells his brothers to cease worrying about him and to consider him as dead.

He could not however, prevent his own thoughts from wandering back to his country and to his friends. As he went in slow stages towards Vienna where he was to teach on the invitation of Archduke Albrecht, he kept a sort of diary of his reflections, which he modeled on the style of Boetius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae,* and entitled, the *Consolations of Theology* (1). He draws a picture of the wretched conditions in France and Germany, and turns to Theology as the source of hope. From his Theology he draws peace of mind, patience and resignation in his exile. This writing was directed to the brother of Gerson, Prior of the Celestins at Lyons, and represents a dialogue between a messenger from Gerson (*Volucer*) and the brother (*Monicus*). Another work that dates from this period is the devotional poem entitled *Josephina* although there is hardly any special reason for the name, since it is not essentially a hymn to St. Joseph (2). In the Fall of the year, Gerson began his lectures at the University of Vienna, the purpose of these lectures being, in all probability, to effect a reform in teaching similar to that which he had advocated in Paris. The few tracts we have that seem to date from the year 1418 are philosophical in content and evidence a tendency on the part of Gerson to harmonize the Realist teaching with that of the Nominalism being taught, such a task in fact as he would have had to enter upon in such a Nominalist center as Vienna before he could hope to effect a change in the ideas there (3).

It is quite certain also, that while at Vienna, Gerson gave time to the refutation of the theories of Hus. But no matter what the work he engaged in, his heart was elsewhere, and though he cherished the friendship of the Archduke and was grateful for his favor, he seized upon the first opportunity

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(1) I, 125-184 : *De consolatione theologiae.*

(2) IV, 783-784.

(3) IV, 793-830 : A series of tracts on *Concepts, Final Cause, On the Concord between Metaphysics and Logic.* All of these evidence the tendency of Gerson to harmonize, in some fashion, Realism with the theory of Nominalism.

to return to France (1). This came in September 1419, when John the Fearless was murdered by the command of the Dauphin. Since the quarrel with Gerson was a personal one, he was permitted to return to France, but it would be too dangerous to face the might of the Burgundians with their English allies in Paris, so he settled in Lyons, there to pass the rest of his days. He received a room in the cloister of the Collegial-Church of St. Paul and in the quiet of his cell he brooded over the woes of France (2). At the University of Paris some attempt was made by those sympathetic to the Burgundians to oust him from his position of Chancellor, but he held to his post in the hope that some day he would be permitted to return to Paris (3). The Dauphin, mindful of the services that Gerson had rendered sent him the sum of two hundred pounds to repay him in part for all the losses he had sustained because of his defense of the Crown, but he was powerless to grant the favor that was sought most since he himself had had to flee from Paris before the united armies of the English and Burgundians in 1419 (4).

The manner of life that Gerson led at Lyons was tranquil. Many thought it stupid that so great ability should be per-

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(1) IV, 527 : *Ode in praise of the Archduke and the University of Vienna.*

(2) I, CLXXVII : « Inter haec, non crederes quantis lachrimarum profluviis ab intimo cordis proruentibus, deflet miserabilem cladem, numquam dignis planctibus aliquandam, praeclarissimi Franciae regni quod intestinis et civilibus bellis dirumpitur atrociter et vastatur et praeda hostibus patet. Gemit insuper amarissime, ut alter Hieremias, videns contritionem populi sui, et laborem et contradictionem in regali Parisiensi civitate, quae nuper erat urbs perfecti decoris. » Thus the brother of Gerson tells of Gerson's life at Lyons, I, CLXXIV-CLXXVII.

(3) In August 1415, the Picards tried to effect the recall of Gerson from Constance. (Cfr DENIFLE-CHATELAIN, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 300.) Gerard Machet and John Courtecuisse had filled the office of Chancellor while Gerson was at Constance, but, when it became apparent that he could not return to take up his position, an attempt was made to make Courtecuisse permanent Chancellor (DENIFLE-CHATELAIN, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 344); this failed and it was not until May 28, 1431, that the post was filled by John Chuffart. (DENIFLE-CHATELAIN, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 509.) Cfr Feret, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 249.

(4) HEFELE-LECLERCQ, *o. c.*, vol. VII, p. 560. Cfr (Bibl. Nat.) Mss fr. 17,487, fol. 227 v° : « Movit insuper illa benevolentiae tuae dignitas mihi nuper indicata tales esse. »

mitted to lie fallow. But though he no longer held the center of the stage, Gerson was none the less active for the reform of the Church. He lived like a hermit, aud rarely stirred from the cloister, but many came to seek direction from him, or demanded counsel by letter. From the standpoint of writing, this is one of the most productive periods of Gerson's life. No less than forty tracts, most of them treating of the spiritual life were composed in answer to the demands that came from the Benedictines, the Franciscans, the Carthusians and the Celestines (1). From his sick-bed at Avignon, d'Ailly wrote to ask the co-operation of his old friend in an attempt to protect Charles VII against the errors of the magicians. Gerson responded immediately with the *Trilogium Astrologiae Theologizate*, in which he set down the Theological grounds for suspicion of the claims of the astrologers (2). At the same time, he tried to enlist the aid of the physician of the King and sent off to him various hints as to how he should keep a sense of religion alive in his master. This letter and the charts which Gerson drew up have not been published but exist in Manuscript form in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* and in the Library of Tours (3). Such writings show that however keenly Gerson felt the devastation of his country at the hands of her foes, he was more perturbed by the fact that Charles VII was not giving promise of fostering the interests of religion. France had not been more fortunate in the sons of Charles VI than she was with his madness. The two eldest boys died as they were approaching manhood, and beginning to set a new mark for license, and the youngest who succeeded to the Crown was sluggish and indolent (4). To conquer this indifference,

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(1) I, CLXXV. SCHWAB, o. c., pp. 767-770.

(2) I, 189-203.

(3) Ms. lat. 17,487 (Bibl. Nat.) and Ms. 379 at the Municipal Library of Tours. Gerson reminds the physician of the King that he will find in Machet a capable and a willing assistant. « Juncto tuo si placet caritati confessore suo qui mihi jure carissimus, tibi vero beneficiis quae gratus recolit astrinctus est. » This no doubt is a reference to the reward which the King had given to Machet at the same time as Gerson received his two hundred pounds.

(4) E. LAVISSE and A. ROMBAUD, *Histoire générale du* IV^e *siècle à nos jours*, vol. III (*Formation des grands États*) 2nd ed., p. 139.

Gerson tried to present the lessons of religion in an appealing way, and sent to the monarch a diagram of a chess game in which the virtues were set against the vices, and where the spirit played to defeat the flesh. It is interesting to note this concept of the spiritual life as a warfare or a game which had to be well played « lest in the moment of death one be checkmate » (1). There is to be seen here, a germ of the practice which Ignatius Loyola was later to develop to great advantage in the Sixteenth Century.

That these suggestions bore any fruit in the life of the King cannot be determined. Charles was so rooted in his garden of pleasure that he could not well be transplanted into another field. But the hope of the kingdom rested with the Dauphin. Machet, who as Confessor to the King had followed him when he fled from Paris to Chartres before the invading armies of the Duke of Burgundy and the Duke of Bedford, took an interest in the training of the Prince who was to succeed to the throne, and wrote to enlist the assistance of his former master (2). The tract with which Gerson responded was a work of three days and an excellent meditation on the obligations incumbent on the King. It constitutes an appeal that the Prince be mindful of his duty to those under him (3). Gerson appeals to him to be as fastidious in his morals as he was in his exterior conduct; he points out the value of study and, in order that the Prince might be guided in his reading, he recommends a list of books in which he incorporated many of his own works (4). The list is interesting as an indication

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(1) Gerson speaks of the life of man as a warfare : « Militia est enim vita hominis super terram. Quam militiam musica consolatur et hortatur. » « God is the Judge Who looks down on the conflict, as devotion rouses the mind to strive for victory. » « Devotio ludet provocans spiritum ad studium victoriae ne in ultimo mortis tractu sibi fiat eschat et mat. » Ms. n° 379, fol. 68 (Tours).

(2) III, 232 : « Age itaque quod agis, vir ornate, non deerit petitionibus tuis mea quod poterit sedulitas. »

(3) III, 227-235. written about 1421

(4) III, 233. The list is as follows : « Prima *Biblia*, praesertim quoad historias et documenta moralia. Item *Postilla de Lyra*. Item *tractatus de vitiis et virtutibus* in latino. Item *tractatus de vitiis et virtutibus* in gallico quae dicitur *Summa Regis*. Item *Martyrologiam Sanctorum*, quale est apud Carthusienses. Item *Legendae Sanctorum* et *Vitae Patrum* et *Speculum historiale Vincenti*. Item *meditationes* et *orationes*

of the books thought to be most worth while in the early part of the Fifteenth Century. What is of chief import is that while many pagan authors are mentioned they are dominated by Christian and moral writers. The Renaissance had already begun, but it was thus far dominated by the Christian ideal.

The young Prince for whom Gerson prepared the instruction mentioned above, did not live to ascend the throne (1). His place was taken by Louis, a younger son of Charles VII. With the training of this Prince, Gerson took a hand, at a time when his own life was drawing to a close. In 1429, in response to an invitation from the tutor of the Prince, he composed a set of rules on the method to be used in the training of the child (2). These rules sum up the lessons of Gerson's long experience as a professor. It is interesting to note how much stress he put on kindness in the teacher, on the use of anecdote and the lives of the Saints as sources of interest and edification and upon education of the heart rather than the head. At the time that Gerson wrote his recommendations, the Prince was very young in years so the rules that were made could not be anything other than elementary (3). The forces of France were undergoing serious defeat at the hands of the English; Orleans was in danger of falling while Charles VII at Chinon continued to doubt the mission of Joan of Arc. The years of Louis' youth

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devotae, ut Augustini, Anselmi, Bernardi et aliorum. Item *collectorium quorumdam opusculorum* in gallico nuper editorum, de *preceptis Dei*, *de examine conscientiae*, *de scientia bene moriendi*, *de contemplatione*, *de mendicitate animae*. *Sermo de Passione Christi* qui incipit *Ad Deum vadit*. *Sermo de Mortuis*. Item *exhortatio de triplici via Regis : Vivat Rex*. *De schala mystica*, sub metro. *Collatio exhortatoria ad pacem : Fiat Pax*. *Collatio exhortatoria ad justitiam et concordiam*. *Jurisdictionum Ecclesiasticae et temporalis*, et quaedam alia. Item liber Aegidii *de regimine principum*. Item libellus *de quatuor virtutibus*. Item *Oeconomica* et *Ethica* et *Politica* Aristotelis translatae in gallicum. Item Valerius Maximus et Frontinus, *de strategematibus bellicis*. Item Salustius. Item Vegetius *de re militare* translatus. Item Boetius *de Consolatione*. Item Seneca, *de Clementia* ad Neronem. Item vulgati auctores, Cato, Theodulus, Aesopus, cum similibus translati. Item liber *de sphera* translatus, pro aliquali cognitione philosophica hujus mundi. Item *Chronica Francorum*. Item Titus Livius. Item Suetonius de duodecim Caesaribus. Item Augustinus *de Civitate Dei* translatus et expositus. »

(1) III, 236.

(2) III, 235-237 : *Instructions of John Gerson to the Tutor of the Prince.*

(3) Louis was born July 3rd 1423.

were impressionable and the swift march of events that marked the changing fortunes of the land he was to rule must have made him respond to the religious appeal that was symbolized in Joan of Arc. Nothing better could have seconded the directions afforded by Gerson than the miracle of courage and devotion manifested in the life of the Saint who captained the forces of France and led them from success to success. Youth could not help but be drawn to such an example.

But if youth might be fascinated by the career of Joan, age knew how to protest, and the University of Paris greeted the news of the victory of the French arms at Orleans with hints that charges of sorcery would be made against Joan of Arc. It is certain the attack was prompted by political motives. Those who had not scrupled to defend John of Burgundy and the doctrine of Tyrannicide, became dauntless defenders of the Faith and began to plot the downfall of the Maid of Orleans. In his retreat in Lyons, Gerson learned of the judgment which some at the University passed upon the conduct of Joan and in May, 1429, he undertook her defense (1). The charge to which he gave most of his attention was that which was trumped up oftenest, two years later, at the trial in Rheims : the wearing of man's attire by Joan. Very ably, he pointed out that any charge of sorcery or of superstition was without basis, and with a little bitter irony remarked that the Maid of Orleans was not seeking gain nor any selfish ends (2). This tract

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(1) IV, 864-868. It is only recently that the authenticity of this tract of Gerson has been proved. Valois, *Un nouveau témoignage sur Jeanne d'Arc. Réponse d'un clerc parisien à l'apologie de la Pucelle par Gerson* (Communication faite à l'Académie de Belles Lettres dans la séance du 28 déc. 1906), Paris, 1907, adduces much conclusive testimony as to Gerson's authorship of the tract. Cfr Denifle-Chatelain, *o, c.*, vol. IV, p. 515, n° 2371 : « Cancellarius Universitatis Paris in Johannam favorem et honoram defensionem optimum librum composuit. »

(2) IV, 865 : « Haec Puella non reperitur uti sorcelegiis ab Ecclesia prohibitis, neque superstitionibus palam reprobatis, neque cautelis hominum fraudulentis, neque ad quaestum proprium. » IV, 866 : « Lex vetus prohibens mulierum uti veste virili et virum veste muliebri, pro quanto est pure judicialis non obligat in nova Lege. » IV, 867 : « Lex hujusmodi, nec, ut judicialis est, nec, ut moralis, damnat usum vestis virilis et militaris in Puella nostra virili et militari, quam ex certis signis elegit Rex coelestis, omnium tamquam Vexilliferam, ad conterendos hostes justitiae. »

of Gerson was to be produced at the trial of Joan, to counteract in some measure the consensus of opinion of the Doctors of the University (1). It is possible that it was the last writing that he composed. If so, then we may say that it was an eminently fitting way for the man who had given so much of his effort for the welfare of his country to have offered the protection of his name and reputation for sincerity to the one through whose inspiration was to come a new and a better era.

During the ten years that he lived in the cloister of St. Paul's at Lyons, the Chancellor cut himself from the feverish activity that had marked his earlier life. He was fully convinced of the necessity of the spiritual life, and of the emptiness of human ambition. Yet his reputation for learning and wisdom attracted many to him, and though he lived quietly, his influence went far beyond the walls of his little cell (2). Requests came to him from all sides, and from all classes. He was asked to compose treatises for the edification and the instruction of monks and Prelates, and while in many instances he complied, his usual response was to refer his clients to the works of the Fathers and the spiritual writers. He was satisfied that he could not improve on their work and if he wrote at all it was in the hope of making them better known and appreciated (3). He did lend his aid to further the reform of the clergy and religious, by writing and preaching. In answer to the request of the Archbishop of Lyons he preached at the diocesan Synod of 1421 (4). Two years later, he broke

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(1) J. Quicherat, *Procès de condemnation et de réhabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc*, vol. IV, p. 260, Paris, 1847, says that one of the reports of the trial mentioned Gerson's opinion as being in contrast with that of other Professors of the University.

(2) I, clxxvi : *Letter of the brother of Gerson* telling of the manner of his life at Lyons : « Dehinc ne putes ipsum ita parietibus augustae cellae coarctari, ut foras egredi non liceat ; extendit saepius dum licet, affectiones in omnes fines terrae et in mari longe ; et peragratis tantis regionibus, ac conspectis oculo rationis variis hominum statibus, nunc prosperis, nunc adversis, coaptat animum unicuique, prout exiguitas valet, omnibus omnia factus ; modo per gratiarum actiones, illis applaudendo ; modo piis orationibus illos adjuvando, hos exhortando, illis compatiendo. »

(3) I, clxxv ; I, 117.

(4) II, 570-575 : *Sermo de reddendo debito.* Gerson has outlined the substance of his address to the clergy of Lyons on the obligations of their state.

his silence again to respond to tracts written by one Willaim Saignet. One of these tracts was an argument in favor of the relaxing of the law of celibacy that bound all clerics in Major Orders, the other was on the question of reserving prebendaries and canonries for the nobles alone. Gerson attempted a refutation of both tracts. Strangely enough he defended the custom of favoring the nobility with ecclesiastical benefices, perhaps because in Lyons the institution was ingrained and not bearing the evil fruitage that accompanied it elsewhere, or perhaps, because no other answer would be welcome to the Archbishop (1). The second tract of Gerson was in the form of a dialogue between Wisdom and Nature on the matter of Celibacy. As the title suggests, the argument that he advanced was based not on ecclesiastical legislation, but solely upon reason (2).

Other writings that date from this time show that though he was hidden away in a cloister, and seeking to advance in the contemplation and the love of God, he had, none the less, sustained his interest in the reform of clergy and people. Some indication has already been given in an earlier Chapter of the activity that he had to wage in response to the numerous petitions that came to him from all corners. With many religious houses he had become a sort of spiritual director and guide. These called upon him, time and again, to give an exposition of his theory on the spiritual life, and though he refused for the most part to comply with their wishes, he did fortunately yield on a few points, and we have from him several tracts on spiritual topics which were written for the edification of the religious, and which show, more than the testimony of his brother and of his friends, how holily Gerson lived the last few years of his life. The tracts on *Mystical Theology*, on the *Perfection of the Heart*, on the *Perfection of Religious*, together with the Commentaries on the *Magnificat* and the *Canticle of Canticles* were the fruit of deep meditation and affectionate contemplation (3). The Mysticism that Gerson

(1) III, 208-225. This does not mean that Gerson was blind to the faults of the system. Cfr III, 213 ff. ; III, 1079, 1303.

(2) II, 617-634.

(3) III, 422-428 : *Scholastic exposition of Mystical Theology*, written in 1424. III, 436-449 : *Dialogue on the Perfection of the Heart*, written in

teaches in these tracts is the fruit of his own experiences, and though it be based on the teaching of Bonaventure and the St. Victors it is none the less Gerson's own. It is sober, reasonable, and prayerful, just such, in fact, as was necessary to counteract the extravagances which marked the mysticism of his own time, but with this we shall have to deal later.

For the welfare of the people, he continued to provide. It is said, and the tradition is ancient enough, that, at the Church of St. Paul in Lyons, Gerson resumed the work of catechizing children which had characterized his activity in Paris (1). Given the zeal of the man, probability is much in favor of the tradition. It is not unlikely that when he took time to defend the people from superstition and false mysticism he would be careful to do what he could to guide the faltering steps of the young in whom he placed all hope for the reform of the Church. Tradition says that Gerson was accustomed to gather the children of the parish for their lessons, and that as he felt death coming nigh, he taught them to pray for him saying : « O God have mercy upon Thy servant Gerson. » One day as they waited for him, seeing that he failed to appear with usual exactitude, some of the little lads slipped into the cloister and sought Gerson in his room. There they found him still in death. With one accord they knelt and uttered the prayer that he had taught them : « O God be merciful upon Thy servant Gerson. »

On the 14th of July, 1429, Gerson passed away. They buried him in the little Chapel of St. Lawrence which was dependent upon Church of St. Paul and was situated quite near to the cloister where Gerson passed his last years. Over his grave they placed a stone which had graven upon it the motto which summed up his life and preaching : *Do Penance and Believe the Gospel* (2). For long the people of Lyons venerated him as a Saint; local Martyrologies entered his name amongst

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1423. II, 682-692 : *On the Perfection and Government of Religious*, 1422. IV, 230-512 : *Twelve tracts on the Magnificat*, 1429, and IV, 22-82 : *Tract on the Canticle of Canticles*, composed in 1429 to answer a request of the Carthusians.

(1) Schwab, *o. c.*, 773.

(2) I, clxx.

the Blessed (1); pilgrimages were made to his tomb; an altar was erected where mass could be said in his honor; and a cult was started which endured into the Sixteenth Century. Then in the politico-religious troubles that tore the city of Lyons, his monument was destroyed and his grave was forgotten. More than likely, the use that was made by the Reformers of the teaching of Gerson had much to do with the slackening of interest in his cult. A century later an attempt was made to revive the old devotion when the grave of Gerson was accidentally rediscovered in 1643, (2) but the people did not respond as heartily as before, although as the Saint of Gallicanism to whom Bossuet and Richer made their chief appeal, the prestige of Gerson was considerably heightened. Nothing did greater harm to the reputation of Gerson that the use that was made of his name in the controversies of France in the Seventeenth Century. For a time the piety and the sincerity that had prompted all his projects for the reform of the Church were forgotten, and he was studied for the political theories whose enunciation was quite accidental with him. Much of the interpretations that were made of his writings were incorrect and biassed, — incorrect, because critics acted upon the supposition that Gerson was the author of the *De modis uniendi ac reformandi Ecclesiae*, which has been shown to be of another hand than his, — biassed, because those who consulted his writings, studied them with the view of finding their own theories confirmed, and wished to apply to the normal life of the Church the rules that he had suggested to help cope with an extreme emergency.

France has not however let the memory of the man die. The city of Lyons commemorated his care of her children with a statue to be found facing the Church of St. Paul in the narrow street that runs along the river bank at the foot of the hill of the Fourvière. Paris has centered her souvenirs of him at the Church of the Sorbonne, where his statue is a companion to that of Bossuet. At Barby, where was the parish Church that Gerson attended in his youth, are many

(1) I, CLXXXIII. MASSON, *o. c.*, p. 418.
(2) I, CXCI.

things that keep fresh the memory of the man. Some of these, notably a stained glass window that recorded the life and the virtues of Gerson, suffered very much with the passing of the war. Many other tributes, of a more precious nature has the memory of Gerson received from such as St. Ignatius, St. Francis of Sales, and Denys the Carthusian. The Council of Trent declared him a « holy man, as remarkable for his Faith and piety as for his teaching ». Pity it was that there were not in his own day men strong enough and numerous to make the sacrifice that he undertook. Had there been others to follow where he led, the Church might have been saved the trials that awaited her a century afterwards. He had given himself unstintedly to the cause to which he set his hand. He had kept himself free from all ties of subserviency in order that he might the more freely fight for the cause of truth (1). It has been the glory of the Church that in every period of her history she inspired some valiant sons with such spirit of sacrifice. It has been her sorrow that often enough their effort was unrewarded.

Gerson's value and reputation as a reformer were assured once his fellow-men became acquainted with the force of conviction that his life displayed. His was not empty preaching. He lived according to his doctrine. If there were few who would follow where he led, it was not because his ideas on reform were wrong. The men of his day were rooted to their traditions. Those who in the seats of authority were afraid to sacrifice one iota of their power lest in losing a little they lose all. The troubled condition of the times made the hazards of the reform seem greater than they were in reality. Princes were not disposed to make peace, prelates were not yet convinced that their splendor was inopportune, and priests and people were suffered to drift into indifference and error. Some few who had come under the influence of Gerson at the Univer-

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(1) II, 388 : In the course of an apology for his failure to obtain, at Constance, the condemnation of John Petit, Gerson says, speaking of himself to his brother. « Expertus es qualemcumque zelum suum ad ea quae Religionem nostram respiciunt : scis quam liber est ab omnibus vinculus mundanae necessitatis, quatenus possit liber amplius, praeparato animo, pro veritate certamen habere. »

sity treasured his ideals and sought to apply them. In the convents and monasteries, his writings were copied faithfully, and those who dreamt of better days harked back to Gerson for their inspiration. Through the darkest days of the Fifteenth Century, men courted the theories that he advanced, and when finally the revolt came, the reformers pointed to Gerson as the source of their ideals (1).

An appreciation too commonly formed of Gerson in the past century, was that he was, with Wyclif and Hus, a precursor of the Protestant Reformation. Winkelman and Jeep, in Germany, Bonnechose and Bonet-Maury (2) in France, make this a prime point in their theses. To establish their theorythey have had perforce to sequester texts from context, and separate expression from idea in Gerson. To be sure, there was nothing that the Chancellor desired more than the reform of the Church in his day. But never for a moment did he dream of departing from the traditional means (3). He did not ask to tear down in order to renew. He did not consider the evil that beset the Church to be irreparable. Not for an instant, though his heart were often leaden with sorrow and chagrin, did he lose the confidence that he had in his fellow-man. Contrary to the reform spirit of the Sixteenth Century, the doctrine of Gerson was not revolutionary. He made clear distinctions between the right exercise and the abuse of authority and because human weakness brought about, after two centuries of gradual decline a bitter fruitage in the Great Western Schism, in the laxity of morals, in the blind superstitions and headstrong heresies that marked the years in which the life

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(1) On the eve of the Reformation many local Councils and Synods gave direction to the clergy to use some of Gerson's writings. — The *Opus tripartitum* was the work cited oftenest. Cfr I, CLXXXI-CLXXXII.

(2) J. WINKELMANN, *Gerson, Wiclefus et Hussus inter se et cum reformatoribus comparati*, Göttingen, 1859. A. JEEP, *Gerson, Wicleff und Hus*. Göttingen, 1857. F. E. BONNECHOSE, *Reformateurs avant la Réforme*. Paris, 1860, 2 vol., G. BONET-MAURY. *Les Précurseurs de la Reforme dans les pays latins du* XII-XV^e^ *siècle*, Paris, 1904.

(3) A. HAUCK, o. c., vol. V, p. 1021 shows that Gerson did not depart from the traditional machinery for reform. Bonnechose advances this as a sign of weakness in Gerson. Rather it points out a fundamental difference between Gerson and the men with whom Bonnechose compares him.

of Gerson was passed he never once lost confidence that by means of sage rulings and wise directions all could be righted in the Church. He did not scout at authority. Rather he spent much time and effort in exhorting those upon whose shoulders authority sat to make proper use of their powers. He was indeed a reformer of the first water, but a reformer in the best sense of the word, in that he aimed to restore and not to disrupt.

Better than reformer, Gerson may, with limitations be called an Apostle of his time, who endeavored to bring to bloom a second spring of Catholicity in the hearts of Christians. Picture but a moment the conditions of his time, and how his teaching reacted against them. It was a period of strife and jealousies not alone amongst nations but amongst individuals. The feud of the Armagnacs aud the Burgundians was but a strong reflection of the formidable passions that tore at the lower strata of society. It was a period of gross pleasures, a period of depression, a period of rioting and a period of sorrow. At no time perhaps in the history of the world had any nation passed through the tribulations of pest, famine, war, and oppression that France then experienced. It was thus a period that needed to have the Gospel of hope preached to it. But where were the ministers ? Many of them too were sunk in the slough of despond, void of ideal, and empty of ambition except an ambition for gain, and an ideal of ease. When words of comfort should have been preached, when from the pulpits and in their lives the clergy should have given solace to the people in their woes, rousing in them higher and more lasting hopes, many for want of training were derelict to their duty ; others who had tasted the sweetness of intellectual training betrayed their calling and put worldly honor and vain learning as the end of their efforts. Into such a period came one who cried down warfare and besought his lords for peace, — a scholar whose ability was high above the level of his time but whose ambition was to serve the common interest. He was one who endeavored to touch, with a finger of Faith, all of the miserable sores that afflicted rich and poor, king and bourgeois alike, and to heal them. His was a desire to speak to ears accustomed to words

of anger and abuse, a message of hope and peace. His was an ambition to raise poor suffering humanity of his day from the depths to the heights, from sorrow to joy, and from despair to hope.

With a courage of conviction that could brave censure and sacrifice prestige, that knew no respect of persons but saw alike in all a weak and suffering humanity, he held bravely to his self-appointed task and though chagrins awaited his efforts, and suspicions and envies hampered his progress he held firm to his ideals. The success that he wanted cannot be easily measured. The reform that he urged was a reform of the heart. But if we may judge from the cult of his spirit that has existed in every generation since his death, his life work has not gone unappreciated.

PART TWO

JOHN GERSON MYSTIC

« Conscius est animus meus, experientia testis.
Mystica quae retuli dogmata vera scio.
Non tamen idcirco scio me fore glorificandum.
Spes mea crux Christi, Gratia, non opera. »
III, 428.

CHAPTER I

THE MYSTICAL WRITINGS OF GERSON

No appreciation of the reforming activity of Gerson would be complete without the study of his mysticism. In like manner, and for the same reason, no one can do justice to the mystical teaching of the man unless he considers it in its proper setting as the high point of his reform. The Mystical Theology and the reforms of Gerson go hand in hand. The first impulse of his spiritual life was towards mysticism, and it was only because of the wish of his father that he did not enter one of the contemplative Orders (1). As it is, the unfolding of Gerson's career has made him known to us more as a mystic than as a controversialist. We have seen him act as guide to the cloistered lives of his sisters. We have remarked that the point of all his teaching was that Theology become less of a science and more of a life (2). We have studied the characteristic of his reforms in the lives of clergy and people and have noticed that all was directed to the one point, — that the people should live up to their beliefs. To challenge the attention and to stimulate the interest of the men of his time he wrote much in the form of letters and tracts, and he gave much of his time in the pulpit and the rostrum to exhort his hearers to take a wholesome attitude on the spiritual life.

The teaching of Gerson does not differ to any considerable degree from that of the Doctors of the Thirteenth Century. There is very little in his mysticism that is not impersonal. In fact, he was anxious to keep it so, for amidst the doubts

(1) Cfr above p. 20.

(2) This attitude accorded well with the spirit of the author of the Imitation who said : « I had rather feel compunction than know how to define it. » A. Renaudet, *Préréforme et humanisme à Paris pendant les premières guerres d'Italie* (1494-1517), p. 74 ff. Paris, 1916, remarks this quality in Gerson. He says in part : « Il était réservé à Jean Gerson d'y fonder véritablement la science de la vie intérieure. »

and the difficulties that harassed the people of his generation, many had taken up with a religion of the heart, had thrown aside all respect for authority, and were led into a false mysticism full of the visions and the revelations that a vivid imagination prepared for them (1). Many of the wise heads of the time suspected all mysticism because of the errors that resulted from the practices of the Beghards and the Flagellanti (2). The value of the mystical teaching of Gerson rests in this that it was a courageous attempt to adapt to the mentality of all the lessons of the great masters of the spiritual life. When sober guidance was necessary to check the exuberant fancy of some, and to arouse others from a stupor of indifference, he was the one to make the effort of give it. While his teaching may be lacking in originality, there is to be noticed in it much of the adaptability and the appeal that was to characterize the writings of the great mystics of Spain in the Sixteenth Century. Some who have read the tracts of Gerson have been struck by the scholastic form of expression that recurs in some of them, and, as an appreciation, have given him the name of being arid (3). They forget that this mysticism they so criticise was arranged for the Class-room and directed to a body of hearers who were sticklers for form. The peculiarity that is so objected to is one of Gerson's greatest titles for recognition, for he braved censure and criticism to carry to the place where they would do much good, — to the Class-room, — the lessons that were calculated to effect a reform in the lives of the students and professors. An adaptation that is far more sympathetic and much more easily understood is to be found in the mystical tracts he wrote for his sisters and for the monks. In these there is a charm that is personal, a force that is invigorating and a lucidity that captures attention and forces conviction. These writings were composed at widely different periods of

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(1) D'Aygalliers, *o. c.*, p. 153; H. Delacroix, *o. c.*, pp. 77-134.

(2) III 369 : « Eos nihilominus commonitos velim, ne citius debito damnare praesumant personas devotas, simplices in suis affectibus admirandis, ubi nihil vel adversum Fidei, vel bonis moribus palam inveniunt. »

(3) W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, p. 158. London, 1912, « mysticism itself becomes arid and formal in the hands of Gerson. »

the life of Gerson (1). They are almost as numerous as his sermons; and they prove by their number and quality, that although he could see about him quite the contrary of the lessons that he advanced, yet he did not falter, but wherever he went, — to the Court and to the Council, — in the lecture-hall and in the pulpit, he gave the best that was in him for the betterment of his fellow-men.

Numerous as are these writings yet they do not represent nearly the breadth of his influence. From the very beginning, he was opposed to the mentality of the Schools that demanded that each professor give expression to his personal opinion in the Class-room, and build up a system of thought that had the mark of newness upon it. As he refused to write a *summa* of philosophy and place himself amongst the « moderni », (2) so, although he had given his whole life to the cultivation of piety and the practice of meditation he was loath to do any more than point out the value of the lessons of the mystics. He was satisfied to spend his effort to make them better known (3). He was anxious that his own teaching and his own experience strike the note of harmony with the teaching of Pseudo-Denys, St. Bernard, the Saint-Victors and St. Bonaventure (4). So conservative had he become in his latter years that it was with difficulty that he could be brought to express in writing the fruit of his reflections. When his brother, Prior of the convent of the Celestines, came to him to ask that he put his talent to use by composing tracts, especially on the Scriptures, Gerson is said to have protested.

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(1) The first writings that we have that display the mystical tendencies of Gerson are the : *De vita spirituali animae*, and the *De impulsibus*. These mark the beginning of his career as a professor. The last tract that we have from him is the *Tractatus super cantica canticorum*, which was composed at the request of the Carthusians and finished not long before his death. Between these years 1395-1429 hardly a year went by when he did not compose some tract dealing with the spiritual life.

(2) I, 106 : « Video tanta volumina ab egregiis viris conscripta, neglecta tamen a plurimis, ita ut vix nudo nomine cognoscantur ; ..simulque considero cujus momenti essent quantulacumque scripta mea, si praecellentissima si calcantur. »

(3) I, 116 : *Letter to Father Oswald, Carthusian.* I 117-119 : *Letter praising the doctrine of St. Bonaventure.* Cfr above pp. 79 ff.

(4) III, 369, III, 434.

« You have Augustine, Gregory, Cassian, Bernard, Richard, Hugh, Anselm and the rest, » he would tell him. « What more do you ask ? (1). » But for all his protest, no less than forty tracts, most of them dealing with Mystical Theology, have come down from these last ten years of the life of Gerson (2). They are the proof of his devotion to the cause of the reform by the spread of Mystical Theology. They show us the manner of his life of his solitude, how he strove after union of mind and heart with God, and how he attempted to express in word the truths which his own experience added to the knowledge he had of the theories of the earlier mystics.

Tne writings of Gerson achieved a great popularity even during his lifetime. Before 1419, he mentioned several collections of his works that had been made (3), and in 1423, in a list which he sent to an interested friend, the brother of Gerson named more than one volume that had been arranged (4). Amongst the many manuscripts of Gerson's works that are to be found in all the great libraries of the continent those which date from the first part of the Fifteenth Century are strikingly numerous. Adorned with fine miniature and written in the careful script with which the men of that day were wont to copy out a work of value, the mystical writings of Gerson seem to have been treated with a special care.

As we approach nearer to our own time, we see the cult of spirit of the Chancellor become much more pronounced. The inception of the art of printing was the occasion for the multiplication, in Germany notably, of many of his tracts and especially of those having a practical and immediate worth.

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(1) I, CLXXV : « Nam mox ut inde sibi sermo fiebat, aut velut obsurdescebat, aut in aliud citius rem ducebat, aut duris sententiis nos increpitans dicebat : Nescitis quid petatis ; quanta qualiave suppetunt pro devotionis exercitio insignia, probatissimaque sanctorum doctorum volumina, quae omnem vitae perfectionem, salubriter et sufficientissime perdocent, nec intendimus ? »

(2) SCHWAB, *o. c.*, p. 762.

(3) Thus in III, 233. Cfr above p. 185 ff.

(4) I, CLXXVIII-CLXXIX : « Volumen in quo continentur plures sermones ejus in concilio Constantiensi. Volumen in quo continentur multae sermones ejus ad Clerum, specialiter in Universitate Parisiensi. Volumen in quo recolliguntur multa brevia per ipsum edita de diversis materiis. Volumen in quo continentur sermones ejus ad populum. »

Scarcely any man, were he saint or scholar, enjoyed the popularity that was Gerson's at the end of the Fifteenth Century when from the presses of Ulrich Zell in Cologne, of John of Westphalia and John Weldener of Louvain, and from the printing-centers of Bruges, Nuremberg, Strasbourg and Basle were disseminated throughout the Low-Countries and along the populous districts of the Rhine, tracts that attempted to repeat in fine gothic type and delicate illumination the charm of the manuscrits containing the prized mystical writings (1). So great was the demand for the works of the Chancellor that four editions of them were published before the year 1500. The first impetus came from Cologne, when John Koelhoff published, in folio, four volumes containing the works of Gerson. This set was completed in 1484, and less than five years later new editions had been published at Strasbourg, in the house of John Preuss, and at Basle by Nicholas Kessler (2). As we approach nearer to the Reformation, the interest in the ideas of Gerson seems to have become more accentuated and many of the great scholars of the Rennaissance seem to have devoted themselves to the study of his works. In John Geiler of Kaysersberg he had a staunch admirer who assisted in the editing of his works (3). Wimpheling was another devoted to him, and, in 1502, Matthew Schurer of Strasbourg published the volume of the sermons which Wimpheling edited (4). In 1494, from the house of Martin Flach, — in 1514, from the presses of John Champenois at Paris, of Froben at Basle, of Knoblauch at Strasburg, and again in 1518 and 1521, new impressions were made (5). These simple facts prove more for the influence of Gerson than many long pages of argumentation. Yet the

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(1) Hain, *o. c.*, vol. I, part. II, pp. 463-476. Graesse, *o. c.*, pp. 59-61. Ulrich Zell of Cologne took the lead in printing the tracts of Gerson. Cfr Hain, nos 7628, 7631 (?), 7675, 7677, 7681. W. A. Copinger, *Supplement to Hain's Repertorium Bibliographicum*,, nos 2669-2704.

(2) Hain, *o. c.*, vol. I, part. II, pp. 459-463. Schwab, *o. c.*, pp. 788-795.

(3) L. Dacheux, *Un réformateur catholique à la fin du* xve *siècle, J. Geiler de Kayserberg*, Paris, 1876.

(4) Hain, *o. c.*, vol. I, part. II, p. 460, no 7622,

(5) A. Potthast, *Wegweiser durch die Geschichtswerke des Europäischen Mittelalters bis 1500.* 2nd ed., vol. I, p. 504, Berlin, 1896, indicates all editions of the complete works of Gerson.

works were by no means complete and contained much that has since been disproved to have been written by Gerson.

Since 1521, but two editions of the work of Gerson have been made, — that of Richer and that of Dupin. The former, published in Paris, in 1606, was arranged with the idea of summoning the authority of Gerson to settle the Gallican controversy that was agitating the Church in France. Since the work of Richer proved unsatisfactory, and Bossuet called for a new presentation of the ideas of Gerson, Dupin took up the work and published at Antwerp, the five volumes which have been largely utilized in this study. The work of Dupin is not perfect (1). Many passages will not stand comparison with the manuscripts, and there is visible throughout the controversial works a Gallican bias on the part of the editor. Apart from this however, and allowing for a few false attributions, the publication of Dupin is of great worth. This is especially true of the mystical writings. With these particularly, the author has been at pains to establish the correct text, by comparing with the manuscripts of the *Bibliothèque Nationale*. The few variants that exist in no way change the thought or the ideas of Gerson (2). As to the inedited writings of the man, they are but few, and, though they be of interest, do not warrant a new edition of the Latin works. From the viewpoint of the language and the form of expression, a work that would not be without interest and worth would be an edition of the works of Gerson in the original French.

Each volume of Dupin includes, however, one or more writings that are falsely attributed to Gerson (3). It is not

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(1) Salembier, *o. c.*, p. 244, footnote. Id., article *Gerson* in the *Dict. th. Cath.*, tome VI, p. 1329.

(2) Allowance must be made also for variations in the manuscripts themselves. Copyists often paid less heed to the wording of a text than to the idea which it expressed.

(3) In volume I of the work of Dupin, the long tract entitled: *Compendium Theologiae* while it reflects many of the ideas of Gerson is written in a style that is clearly not his, and contains indications that it was written by a monk for the use of religious. Dupin himself doubts the authenticity of the work. Cfr also Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 780.

Volume II has several works under the name of Gerson that are not his. They are, the *De concilio unius obedientiae*, II, 24-32, which is really a work of d'Ailly (Cfr Salembier, *o. c.*, p. 198), the *Octo conclusiones*

strange that his name was attached to many of the tracts which became popular in the Century preceding the Reformation, since his name and his reputation was generally known. Any work that seemed to exemplify his spirit was assigned to him. Thus although contemporaries testified that some one other than Gerson was the author of several famous tracts, it has been under his name that they have been cited even down to our own time. *The Alphabet of Divine Love*, by John Nider, O. P., was for long assigned to Gerson, even in the North, where Mombaer testified that the work came from Nider (1). Another writing which Dupin prints but which he declares not to be from the hand of Gerson is the : *Come to me all you that Labor and are Burdened.* This is clearly the work of a Benedictine monk (2). To these Schwab has added several other writings to be found in the third volume. One of these, a tract in favor of frequent communion, is well in the spirit of Gerson, but the author is plainly of German extraction, and more familiar with the mentality of the people than Gerson could have become in his brief sojourn in Germany (3).

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quarum dogmatizatio utilis videtur pro exterminatione modern ischismatis, II, 110 (Salembier, *o. c.*, p. 244), the *Tractatus de statu ecclesiae*, II, 154-156, the *De modis uniendi et reformandi ecclesiae in concilio universali*, II, 161-201 (Cfr Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 470, Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 193, and Hauck, *o. c.*, vol. V, p. 953), the sermon, *De morbis et calamitatibus ecclesiae*, II, 300-313 (Finke, *Acta*, vol. II, p. 529 indicates Peter of Brussels as the author), the *Declaratio compendiosa defectuum virorum ecclesiasticorum*, II, 314-318, which is taken verbatim from a tract of Langenstein (II, 835-842), the *Exhortatio ad constantiam*, which is clearly written by a monk (Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 780), and the tract *Contra proprietarios regulae Sancti Augustini*, II, 775.

In volume III, besides the works cited in the text above, the *Tenor appellationis cujusdam a divina justitia ad divinam misericordiam.*

Volume IV has two works which Dupin says were ascribed to Gerson. These are the *Donatus moralizantibus*, IV, 835-844, and the *Dialogus inter francum et anglicum*, IV, 844-858.

(1) « Johannes Nider docet in suo *Alphabeto Amoris.* » Thus, Mombaer in his *Meditatorium* which Watrigant prints in his *Quelques promoteurs de la méditation méthodique au* xv^e^ *siècle* (Collection de la Bibliothèque des Exercices de St. Ignace, n° 59) Enghien, 1919. Cfr. also Feret, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 225, note 3. The *Alphabet of Divine Love* is to be found in vol. III, 769-800.

(2) III, 709-740 : *Tractatus de verbis Domini : Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis*, etc. III, 728 refers to St. Benedict as « legislator noster ».

(3) III, 310-323 : *Collecta super incitatione cujusdam ad digne suscipiendum Corpus Domini.*

By a strange coincidence there have also been attributed to the Chancellor a series of letters which Thomas a Kempis composed (1). The letters deal with spiritual subjects and one of them carries a theme that is repeated in the *Imitation of Christ* (2). In the Wolfenbüttler Codex they are written under the name of Gerson, but a knowing hand has made the correction and written in the margin of the manuscript that the letters belong really to a Kempis (3). The internal criticism of the letters bears out the assertion for they are patently the letters of a religious. In the last letter of the series, — which has been thought to have been a letter from Gerson to one of his brothers, — there is a passage which plainly contradicts any other attribution. The letter is in the form an exhortation to be mindful of the dead. The author says how they should be remembered in the office, and while one is serving Mass (4). This, given the fact that Gerson was himself offering the sacrifice of the Mass long before his brothers entered the monastic life, makes it impossible that he was the author of the letters, the spirit and the thought of which agree very well with the spirit of Thomas à Kempis (5).

But this difficulty is only a part of a greater controversy which has brought the names of Thomas à Kempis and that of Gerson into opposition during well nigh four hundred years. Ever since the year 1383, when the Venetian edition of the *Imitation of Christ* assigned the work to Gerson (6), his claims

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(1) III, 746-757, Cfr Schwab, o. c., p. 780.

(2) III, 752-754 : *Epistola pro confortatione cujusdam tentati.* This letter develops much the same theme as Chapters XI and XII of the Second Book of the *Imitation*, — that as we were saved by suffering so we must in our life be lovers of the Cross. « Et omnes (ni fallor) homines cupiunt esse cum Christo, et ad populum ejus pertinere ; sed pauci volunt sequi vitam Christi. »

(3) Schwab, o. c., p. 780.

(4) III, 757 : « Attente vigilias legamus : libenter et saepius ad Missam ministremus, et cum sacerdote vota labiorum nostrorum in conspectu summi Sacerdotis etc. »

(5) The brothers of Gerson could not have entered religion before the year 1400, and he had been ordained for at least five years before that. Cfr. above p. 29.

(6) P. E. Puyol, *Héliotypies des principaux manuscrits du livre de imitatione Christi*, pp. 1-4, Paris, 1898 ; Hain, o. c., vol. II, p. 119, n° 9085.

to the authorship of the most wonderful book that human mind ever conceived has found defenders. Scarcely a generation passes but that the old controversy blazes out again. Those who in their acquaintance with Gerson have contented themselves with the reading of the tracts that he wrote for the spiritual guidance of his sisters have come into contact with that phase of the activity of the Chancellor that best matches the ideals of the *Imitation* and so do not find much difficulty in admitting the strength of his title. Others, noting only the feverish character of his life work, the nervousness of his disposition and the many sided activity that held his attention, deny to him the evenness of character and the tranquillity of soul that they require in the author of the *Imitation*. To say that Gerson could not have written the work for such reasons is to do injustice to one of the finest models of piety and honest fervor that the Fifteenth Century knew. No one who compares the simplicity and power of the *Mountain of Contemplation* with the strong Faith and the deep humility of the tract on *Poverty of Spirit*, who matches the sober judgment of the *Distinction of True from False Visions* with the vigor and the practical worth of the Tract on *Mystical Theology* or other works in which may be perceived certain echoes of the thought of the *Imitation of Christ* (1), would refuse to consider his claim or his capability. The bulk of the early printed editions of the *Imitation* were assigned to him (2). For long, copies of the book that bore the name of Gerson were circulated in Germany and in the Low-Countries, (3) although by a peculiar

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(1) Cfr II, 710 : « Quid consultius quam tenere silentiam. » I, 104 : « Discamus non tam disputare quam vivere memoris finis nostri,.... omnes utique morimur tamenin super nescio qualibus quaestiunculis tam crebra et inutili argumentatione occupati, diem exitus nostri nequaquam attendimus. » I, 166 : « Porro quis nesciat veram dilectionem non in prosperis sed in adversis consistere. » Cfr also, Gence, *Gerson restitué et expliqué par lui-même*, Paris, 1836.

(2) P. E. Puyol, *Descriptions bibliographiques des manuscrits et des principales éditions du livre de Imitatione Christi*, pp. 489-490, Paris, 1898 ; Hain, *o. c.*, vol. II, pp. 119-124.

(3) One has but to consider the list of *Incunabulae* in Hain and Copinger. Graese, *Trésor des livres rares et précieux*. Vol, III, p. 413 ff., mentions an edition of the *Imitation* printed at Louvain in 1486, and another at Antwerp the next year, under the name of Gerson.

circumstance that is difficult to explain, not one of the men who printed the collections of his works, entertained the belief in his authorship of the *Imitation*. The chief defenders of his title to the work have been French (1). In fact, the whole controversy has been developed quite on lines of nationality, there even having been a time when some Germans held for the rights of Tauler. Others defended the claims of Sts Bernard and Bonaventure, and Innocent III (2). To-day, the majority of the scholars stand for the Northern origin of the work, and with few exceptions indicate Thomas à Kempis as the author (3). Recently, new objections have been adduced by Pereive, but notwithstanding his theory, the case against Gerson is quite strong (4).

One of the worst blows administered to his cause is the argument of silence. Two men who were close to the Chancellor, and who had every occasion to have known of his activities took upon themselves to draw up a list of his writings. In the year 1423, his brother gave a catalogue of titles of most of his works in which there is no mention of the *Imitation* (5). It is true the list is not complete, but no work of importance has been omitted and since the letter was directed to a monk who sought to profit by the spiritual direction of the Chancellor it is difficult to see how his brother could have neglected to mention the tract that would have been of the greatest worth. The secretary of Gerson, the man who accompanied him to Constance and into exile in Germany, Jacques de Cirhesio, corroborates the suspicion which the omission of the brother

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(1) Thus in the Seventeenth Century when the controversy broke out after two hundred years when no one disputed the claims of Thomas à Kempis many French writers took part, cfr *Opera Gersonii*, I, CLXXXVII. In the last century, DAUNOU, GENCE, LEROY, THOMASSY and DELAUNAY were the principal defenders of Gersons' title to the *Imitation*.

(2) The chief contenders have been : à Kempis, — Gerson, Chancellor of the University, and Gersen, Benedictine Abbot of the Monastery of Vercelli in Italy.

(3) Thus Malou, Funk, Duchesne, Acquoy, Vacandard. A. HYMA, *The Christian Renaissance*, Grand Rapids, 1925.

(4) On Nov. 18, 1925, A. Pereive read a paper before the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, in which he advanced a few new arguments in favor of Gerson's authorship. A. Fleury answered him in defense of the claims of à Kempis, and Bellaguy in favor of the Benedictine, Gersen. *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 1926, tome XXII, p. 461.

(5) I, CLXXVII-CLXXIX.

had already aroused. Shortly after the death of the Chancellor when the admirers of the man were anxious to group together all the writings that he had composed, Oswald the Carthusian, one of Gerson's former correspondents, wrote to the secretary asking him to forward a complete list of the writings of his forme master (1). The response of Cirhesio bears every indication that he made it as complete as possible. Not a few works mentioned are accompanied by a short analysis of their content. There is no mention of the *Imitation*. Gerson himself was not slow to mention his own compositions. We have seen how he spoke of them in a letter to the King (2). It is not likely that he would neglect to mention the *Imitation of Christ* were he the author. Yet there are two distinct passages in his writing when he had a clear chance to recommend the *Imitation,* once in a letter to d'Ailly and again in a treatise that he wrote for his sisters (3). On both occasions he spoke of « spiritual consolation », yet never a word of the work that has done most to comfort and console afflicted spirits. Even if he knew of the existence of the work he could hardly have refrained from mentioning it.

To substantiate the title of Thomas à Kempis, there exists direct testimony given by men such as Busch, Reyd and Mombaer who were familiar with à Kempis and who had every occasion to know of his activities (4). John Busch was

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(1) Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 779.

(2) Cfr Chapter IX, p. 193 ; III, 233. Mention of his writings by Gerson may be noticed in I, 169 ; I, 450 ; III, 435.

(3) III, 429-432 : *Letters of Consolation sent to d'Ailly*. III, 602-605 : *Letter of Gerson to his Sisters* telling them how to meditate each Day. To d'Ailly Gerson writes : « Propterea neque de hac re amplius, neque de aliis ad hanc, quam postulare dignaris consolationem spiritualem spectantibus, scribere quidquam praesumpsi. » Both these letters were written very shortly after the time when, were he the author of the *Imitation*, Gerson must have written the work. Not to have mentioned the *Imitation* in so favorable circumstances is certainly a strong evidence that he was not the author of the work. The earliest French translations of the *Imitation* were known as the *De interna consolatione*, — the *Incipit* of the Third Book, with which the French copy began.

(4) J. B. Malou, *Recherches historiques et critiques sur le véritable auteur du livre de l'Imitation de Jésus Christ*, p. 43 ff., Louvain, 1848. E. Vacandard, *Études de critique et d'histoire religieuse*, vol. IV, p. 299, Paris, 1923.

the historian of the Congregation of Windesheim, to which à Kempis belonged. In a work which he composed on *Famous Men of the Congregation of Windesheim*, Busch cites Thomas à Kempis, « who composed many devotional books such as the *Imitation of Christ* (1) ». This testimony is supplemented by that of Hermann Reyd who was connected with the monastery of Neuwerk (*Novi operis*), near Halle, and who belonged to the Congregation of Windesheim. Reyd prided himself not a little upon his acquaintance with Thomas à Kempis, and tells of an interview that he had with him in the course of a General Chapter held in the monastery of Mount Saint Agnes, in 1454. He says : « The brother who compiled the book of the *Imitation* is called Thomas. He is Subprior of the monastery of Saint Agnes, near Zwoll in the diocese of Utrecht. This writer was still living in the year 1454, and I, brother Hermann of the monastery of Neuwerk in the diocese of Magdeburg, spoke with him, when I was in the General Chapter (2). » The testimony of Mombaer is also quite definite. He was perhaps one of the greatest admirers of the writings of Gerson at the end of the Fifteenth Century. In his Spiritual Exercises which he composed for his own direction, but which he introduced to his disciples later on, he cites several passages of the *Imitation of Christ* and refers to Thomas à Kempis as the author of them (3). Mombaer, like the two preceding, drew up a catalogue of the famous men of the monastery of Windesheim, and when he came to the name of Thomas, he not alone cited him as the author of the *Imitation*, but mentioned as well that many « wrongly attributed the work to Gerson » (4). Much other evidence of a conclusive nature may be found in the work of Malou. During at least thirty years of the lifetime of Thomas à Kempis, he was known as the one to whom should be attributed the authorship of the *Imitation*.

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(1) Busch dwelt in the monastery of Mount St. Agnes from 1419-1424, and from 1456-1459, so he had ample opportunity to get his facts from Thomas himself who did not die until 1471.

(2) Malou, *o. c.*, p. 47 ; Vacandard, *o. c.*, p. 210 gives the text of the testimony of Reyd.

(3) Malou, *o. c.*, p. 56.

(4) *Ibid.*

This paternity is borne out by a study of the style of the work itself. There is, to be sure, a simplicity and a calm that pervades the *Imitation* that does not tally well with the life of dispute that Gerson led. According to the earliest dated manuscript that we possess the work must have been composed about the year 1421 and it is difficult to see where Gerson had the time and the composure to produce such a work as the *Imitation* before that date. If the work were written by him during the first years of his stay in Lyons, his brother could hardly have refrained from mentioning it (1). The *Imitation of Christ* was patently written by a monk and written for men who lived in a monastery (2). Despite his long experience in advising others and his sound sympathy for those who strove after perfection in the cloister, Gerson had not the assurance and the security that the author of the *Imitation* displays in treating the manner of life of monks. He could not, moreover, have sustained to so great length the evenness of tone and the quiet of discussion which is to be noticed in every page of the work. He could not have refrained from the citation of the classics. He could not have failed to give entrance to some scholastic disputation. But most of all, he could never have expressed his thoughts in just the form that the author of the *Imitation* does. Malou has pointed out that certain turns of expression reflect the Flemish idiom (3). Some

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(1) O. Le Roy, *Études sur les mystères et sur divers Mss de Gerson*, Paris, 1837, claimed to find an inference to Gerson's authorship of the *Imitation*, in the Letter of his brother (I, CLXXIV-CLXXVII). When it came to giving the date and the occasion for the composition of the work by Gerson, Le Roy was at a loss what to do, but he finally settled on the period of Gerson's sojourn in Bruges, and held that the work was composed for the sisters of the Chancellor. Cfr Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 783 and 784 note 3; Malou, *o. c.*, p. 193 ff.

(2) *De Imitatione Christi*, Lib. I, cap. 19 : « Vita boni religiosi omnibus virtutibus pollere debet. Inspector noster est Deus. Omni die renovare debemus propositum nostrum... quasi hodie primum ad conversionem venissemus. » Lib. III, cap. 10 : « Non enim datum est omnibus ut, omnibus abdicatis, saeculo renuntient et monasticam vitam assumant. »

(3) Malou, *o. c.*, p. 79. The expression : « si scires totam bibliam exterius » is an idiomatic expression in the Flemish : « Al wist gij geheel de Schriftuur Van Buiten », i. e. « even if you were to know the Bible from the outside ». Malou cites many other peculiar expressions in the text of the *Imitation* which only the Flemish idiom can translate, — A clear

phrases of the work which are quite incomprehensible in the Latin are nothing more than a literal rendition of Flemish expressions. The *Imitation of Christ* could not have been written by any one not familiar with the language of the Low-Countries. Gerson had not the knowledge necessary, although he was for four years in the city of Bruges, for when he writes, in the year 1400, of the manner of his life there he remarks that though it was impossible for him to teach by word of mouth, he could none the less teach by example (1). So that much as we would like to be able to add to the glory of the man by connecting his name with the work that has given the best picture of the religious life of the Middle Ages, there is little upon which we can base our evidence.

The case for Thomas à Kempis is, on the contrary quite clear. Besides the external witness that we have to his authorship, and besides the indication which the form and the expressions of the *Imitation* give us to prove that it is of Flemish origin, the very thoughts expressed and the ideas incorporated in the work bear such close relation to thoughts that may be found in the writings of other members of the School of the Brethren of the Common Life that it becomes unreasonable to doubt further of the source of the work. Malou and Spitzen have pointed out at length such likenesses between the thought in the *Imitation* and that to be found in the works of Schoonhoven († 1431), John van Huesden († 1428), Henry of Mande († 1415), and Gerlac Peters († 1411), as to bar from the possibility of authorship any but a man familiar with the spirit of the *Devotio Moderna* of the North (2). While he was sympathetic to the movement to the extent of defending the brethren against the aggressions of Matthew Grabon, and while he had had contact with the writings of Ruysbroeck and Schoonhoven, Gerson patently was not influenced by them (3). Much less was the other claimant, the Benedictine

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indication that the phrases were thought first in Flemish and then expressed in Latin. Cfr also Spitzen, *Les hollandismes de l'Imitation de Jésus-Christ*, Utrecht, 1884.

(1) IV, 727 : « Consideretur quod perfectus esse Brugis potest solo etiam vitae exemplo, *si verba deessent.* » (Italics my own. A.)

(2) Malou, o. c., pp. 72-78.

(3) In fact when he speaks of the manner of life of the Brethren in

Abbot, Gersen or Gessen, whose very existence, according to Malou and Duchesne, is no more than a matter of conjecture (1).

Many passages of the *Imitation* repeat the words of the tract on the *Life and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ* by John van Huesden (2). Amongst the many mystical writings of Henry of Mande all of which were written before 1415, and so before the date usually assigned for the composition of the *Imitation*, are to be found passages identical with the words of the *Imitation* (3). It is impossible that the works of Mande were not used. Similarly with the *Soliloquium* of Peters. Of this work, Monsignor Puyol, one who dedicated himself more perhaps than any other of our time to the study of the *Imitation*, says : « It breathes the doctrine and the eloquence of the *Imitation* (4). » From the works of Schoonhoven there remains not a great deal from which to establish a comparison, but there is a letter of his that bears striking resemblance with the *Imitation*. The comparison which we draw briefly between the two texts may indicate what Becker, in his work on the *Author of the Imitation of Christ* spends many pages to prove (5). Whoever wrote the *Imitation* must certainly have

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his tract *De laude scriptorum*, Gerson shows no sign of having come into close contact with them, but says : « Sunt adhuc, *ut accepi*, nonnulli professores regulae beatissimi Augustini,.. apud Hollandiam. »

We shall see later how he quarreled with Schoonhoven for attempting to defend Ruysbroeck.

(1) Malou, *o. c.*, p. 145 ff. ; Duchesne, article in the *Bulletin Critique*, 1881, p. 288, note 2, cited by Vacandard, *o. c.*, p. 212.

(2) Puyol, who could not be called biased in his views although he favored the claim of the Benedictine Gersen, remarked the similarity between the writing of van Huesden's treatise and parts of the *Imitation*. Cfr Puyol, *L'auteur de l'Imitation* (1e section, *la contestation*), pp. 467-471), Paris, 1899; Malou, *o. c.*, pp. 75-76.

(3) Puyol, *o. c.*, pp. 476-477.

(4) *Ibid.*, pp. 473-474.

(5) Becker, *L'auteur de l'Imitation et les documents néerlandais*, pp. 174-180, The Hague, 1882, quotes in part as follows :

LETTER OF SCHOONHOVEN	IMITATION OF CHRIST.
« Tutius est *latere* quam apparere.. Item quidam sanctus : *Nemo secure apparet, nisi qui libenter latet. Nemo secure praeest nisi qui libenter subest. Nemo secure loquitur nisi qui libenter tacet.* »	« Facilius est domi *latere* quam foris se posse sufficienter custodire. *Nemo secure apparet, nisi qui libenter latet. Nemo secure loquitur nisi qui libenter tacet. Nemo secure praeest nisi qui libenter subest.* » Lib. I, cap. 20.

belonged to the movement which was started by Groote. In no other way could he have so read and meditated the teachings of the brethren as to express himself by means of their ideas and in their very language.

A recent critic, Father van Ginneken of the University of Nimègue, mindful of these resemblances of thought and expression, has advanced the theory that the *Imitation of Christ* is for the most part the work of Gerard Groote and Schoonhoven and that à Kempis did no more than arrange and copy their writings (1). He contends that the Second and Third Books of the *Imitation* are made up of a tract entitled : *On Internal Conversation*, which Groote modeled after the *Spiritual Epousal* of Hugh of Saint-Victor (2). This solution is not without its attraction, for a Gersonist especially. Gerson himself, under the influence of the tract of Hugh of Saint-Victor, wrote on *Spiritual Poverty* (3). This similarity of interests could well explain why the *Imitation* was attributed to him at so early a date. But unfortunately for the theory of van Ginneken the manuscript of the *De conversatione interna* is lost, and there are those who doubt very much if it ever existed (4). In point of fact, the testimony in favor of the hypothesis of

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« Tertium est ut non te *misceas hominibus*.. in *quantum potes* bono modo, sed tene te solitarium sponso tuo Christo... Seneca : *quoties inter homines fui, minor homo redii.* »

Versus : *Pax est in cella*, foris autem nonnisi bella. »

« Maximi sanctorum *humana consortia ubi poterant* vitabant, et Deo in secreto vivere eligebant. Dixit quidam : *quoties inter homines fui, minor homo redii.* » Lib. I, cap. 20.

« *In cella* invenies, quod de foris saepius amittes.. Mane *in cella*, quia non invenies alibi tantam *pacem.* » Lib. I, cap. 20.

These excerpts are cited in Vacandard, o. c., Vol. IV, pp. 198-199.

(1) J. van Ginneken, *Geert Groote : de schrijver van boek II en III der Imitatio Christi*, article in *Studiën*, Feb. 1927, pp. 85-120, Id., *Het dagboek van Geert Groote in de Maanden zijner Schande*, *Studiën*, April 1927, pp. 249-293. Id., *Geert Groote en Jan van Schoonhoven zijn de ware schrijvers der Imitatio Christi ; Thomas van Kempen redigeerde hun werk*, article in the *Nieuwe Eeuw*, n° 473, Sept. 16, 1926, pp. 1588-1589.

(2) *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 1926, tome XXII, p. 947.

(3) III, 487-541.

(4) *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 1927, tome XXIII, p. 402.

van Ginneken is very slight. Trithemius is the only historian who attributes to Groote such a work as the *De conversatione interna*, and he is so far removed from the period of Groote that his testimony cannot stand alone (1). Again, it is difficult to believe that the *Imitation* is a compilation of one or more works. There is too much unity and sequence in the book for that. The author of the *Imitation* may have been indebted to others for the thoughts that he expressed, but the arrangement and the spirit of the work are patently his own. And that the author was no other than Thomas à Kempis, those who have traced his thought to its source in the writings of the Brethren of the Common Life, and who have marked the similarity of expression as of ideals between the Imitation and the many other works attributed to à Kempis, cannot remain long in doubt (2). However, that so famous a book as the *Imitation* was for long assigned to Gerson is a striking proof of the prestige of the man of which we shall make use in a later Chapter. If so great a work were attributed to him it was because, judging from the tone of his writings, men thought him worthy of it.

Amongst the many manuscripts which contain the works of Gerson, are to be noticed several tracts which have bearing on his mystical teaching. The catalogues of the libraries of Tours, Valenciennes, Avignon and the *Bibliothèque Nationale* of Paris indicate various tracts that are as yet unpublished (3).

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(1) The testimony of Busch, Reyd and Mombaer is that of contemporaries, Malou, *o. c.*, pp. 43-60, lists testimonies to the number of fifteen.

(2) Malou, *o. c.*, pp. 87-94, makes interesting comparisons between passages of the Imitation and excerpts from other writings of à Kempis. Cfr Huyben, *Voor Thomas van Kempen*, article in *Ons geestelijk Erf*, 1927, tome I, pp. 38-49.

(3) Cfr *Catalogue général des mss dans les bibliothèques de la France*, tome XXIX (Avignon, tome I), pp. 258, reports ms. n° 342, fol. 95, *modus brevis et utilis confitendi*, — fol. 99-103 : Letter from *Gerson to a monk*; tome XXXVII (Tours, tome I), pp. 290 ff. ms. n° 378, fol. 108v°, short excerpt on *Predestination*, n° 403. *On the contemplation of a devout soul.* n° 384, 3rd part of a prose on St. Joseph (first and second parts edited) n° 379 ; *Letter to physician of Charles VII*, (cfr above p. 192) ; tome XXV (Valenciennes) p. 294, mentions translations made by Gerson ms. n° 239, fols 53v°, 93. At the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, besides mss that we cite in this chapter, ms. fr. 2460, fols 25-64 : *On the Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost* is quite noteworthy.

Amongst the biographers of Gerson, several have made indications to works which they claimed belonged to the Chancellor and which were still inedited. Bourret, with his attention on the sermons alone, was able to point out several which were still inedited in French, and a few which, until his study and comparisons were made, were not known to be from Gerson at all (1). Thomassy was less fortunate in his attributions (2). He found in the *Bibliothèque Nationale* a manuscript containing a *Letter on the Passion of Christ*, which, because of its position amongst several tracts of Gerson, and also because of the form of address : « to my sister, » he concluded to be an abbreviation of the famous *Ad Deum vadit*. But if that be true, then Gerson had changed his whole point of view between times. Where the *Ad Deum vadit* is prayerful and sober, the *Letter on the Passion* is grotesque and emotional. Nothing could be more contrary than the portrait of the Blessed Mother in the two tracts (3). In the former she is represented as the Church pictures her, — silent and full of courage. In the latter, the author sees her breaking under the stress of sorrow and loss and giving vent to her emotions. There are, besides, many details in the *Letter on the Passion* which Gerson would call trivial and irreverent. It is not likely that he could be the author of two tracts so much in contrast to each other.

Another work that has for long been attributed to the Chancellor, and which indeed is included amongst his works, is the *Mirror of a Good Life* (4). A title under which this short poem may be better known is that of the *Dance of Death*. In the year 1424, there was erected along the archway of the

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(1) Bourret, *o. c.*, p. 45 mentions a *Sermon for the Second Sunday of Lent*, n° 518 in the Imperial Library of Paris, (The new number is fr. 24,840, Bibl. Nat.) a *Sermon on the Twelve Fruits of the Holy Ghost*, and another on *the Passion*. (New number is 14,974, Bibl. Nat.) Bourret called attention to the Sermons in French at the Library of Tours, Ms. n° 386.

(2) Thomassy, *John Gerson*, pp. 338-369, Paris, 1843.

(3) Schwab, *o. c.*, pp. 781-782.

(4) III, 688-691. Ms. lat. 14,904, fols 64-72. Bibl. Nat., gives a much more complete version than is found in Dupin. The manuscript contains little more than works of Gerson and Clamanges. But the position amongst the works of the Chancellor hardly constitutes a strong argument in favor of his authorship.

Cemetery of the Innocents at Paris, a representation of the manner in which Death comes into the lives of all men, of all classes (1). It is possible that the theme was inspired by a dance that had actually become popular in those years when famine and pest made Death a familiar figure to all. It is quite likely that one of the reasons that led to the erection of the first Dance of Death was that it might be a challenge to the consciences of public sinners who made a haunt of the Cemetery, and thus prevent the disorderly scenes that took place nightly within the shelter of its walls. That Gerson had little or nothing to do with the erection of the monument or the writing of the poem, — verses of which were to accompany each panel that pictured the advent of Death, — is quite certain. For, first, he was not in Paris at the time (2). Again, although he had constantly the thought of Death in his mind, and wrote and spoke much on the subject, he had none of the sneering fear that is represented in the poem. His reaction to the idea of Death is to be seen in his *Work in Three Parts* (*Opus Tripartitum*) which priests and people found so consoling and helpful that their demand for the work made it the most known of all Gerson's writings (3). Then, there are also his sermons on Death (4). But besides these there is in manuscript form, a tract of his entitled : *The Mirror of a Good Life* which may have been the means of suggesting the poem (5). The idea which Gerson develops here is that of the sage : « in all thy works remember the last end and thou shalt never sin ». The purpose that he had in writing the tract was not so much to excite and instill fear, as to rouse courage against temptation,

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(1) Michel, *Histoire de l'Art*, vol. III, p. 288, Paris, 1907. The Duke of Burgundy, patron of Art, had a Dance of Death made for his hotel at Bruges (1449). St. Paul's of London had a copy made, — Salisbury also (Cfr Belloc, *Paris*, 5th ed., p. 255, London, 1923), but there are few relics of these monuments left to-day. The old bridge at Lucerne has the best example. Louis XIV tore down the relics of the monument in Paris because he found it too hideous.

(2) According to the *Journal* of Nicolas de Baye, the Dance of Death was erected in Paris in 1424 (Cfr Michel, o. c., vol. III, p. 288). Gerson was at that time in Lyons.

(3) I, 425-450 : *Opus tripartitum*. Cfr above p. 119.

(4) III, 1551-1573.

(5) Ms. fr. 990, fols 226-236. Bibl. Nat : *Miroir de bonne vie*..

in order, as he said, « that by this tract you may be able to escape eternal damnation, which may He grant Who is called Blessed » (1).

This theme of Death is quite common in the works of Gerson. Under the influence of his ideas many meditations and dialogues were written on the subject by others. Of these, perhaps one of the most famous, and certainly one of the most eloquent, is the dialogue between the devil and a dying soul, that has found expression in the paintings of some of the artists of the late Fifteenth Century. Masson found such a dialogue in Ms. fr. 24, 867 at the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, and because it followed closely upon some of the writings of the Chancellor, concluded that it belonged to him (2). But the table of contents which comes at the head of the tome indicates Erasmus as the author of the work the style and the thought of which accord better with the Sixteenth than with the Fourteenth Century (3).

In the first part of the present work, we have had occasion to see the broad activity of Gerson and to cite from his voluminous works. We have seen him in the capacity of Court Preacher and Catechist, as Envoy to Papal Thrones and as simple pastor of the people, as a professor of the University whose opinions were sought and respected and as guide to people of little or no education. It was customary for the great men of the Middle Ages to take an interest in all fields of learning and action. The readiness which Gerson displayed to treat of all topics of law, moral, politics and Faith is a trait which we find in the lives of William of Occam, Albert the Great, Bonaventure and St. Thomas (4). But though all of them equaled or even excelled the Chancellor in power of thought and versatility, none of them applied his knowledge on so broad a scale as did he. Where they stopped for the most part in the intellectual centers, Gerson went out amongst the people. Where they strove to fathom deeper and deeper into the depths of learning, Gerson toiled to turn his knowledge

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(1) *Ibid.*, fol. 235 recto : « afinque par cecy tu puisses eschevez la dampnacion pardurable et nous veuille octroyer celui qui est dit benedictus. »

(2) Masson, *o. c.*, p. 158-159.

(3) Ms. fr. 24,867, Bibl. Nat.

(4) De Wulf, *o. c.*, vol. I, pp. 345-376, vol. II, pp. 1-30 ; 163 ff.

into terms that would be comprehensible to the people. The various devices to which he resorted in his effort to adjust his thought to the capacity of his hearers and readers is a striking evidence of the completeness of his devotion to his priestly ministry, and a proof of his determination to be all things to all men. It was not enough that he composed summaries of doctrine, not enough that he instructed his congregations from the pulpit; he sought to express his ideals in a language and in a form that would attract an audience. It was with that intent that he resorted to the form of dialogue, that he introduced allegory and example into his writing, that he reached out after the attention of his readers by suggesting devices to recall spiritual truths, that he wrote poems illustrative of the mystical life and that he even essayed to compose dramas.

At the time when Gerson's power was greatest, the drama had quite a vogue in Paris. Charles VI lent his approbation and gave financial support, in 1405, to a guild that was formed for the presentation of the Mystery of the Passion (1). No doubt the reason for the demand for a Charter on the part of the guild was because opposition was becoming keen. Up till this time the Colleges and some of the convents of the University had been active in the development of the drama, and the actors found the clergy willing to supply them with copes and whatever ecclesiastial vestments they had need of to give realism to the productions. Gerson could not have turned from so rich an opportunity to teach a moral lesson, and must have thought to co-operate in the movement for the religious instruction of the people through the medium of the drama. There are a few of his writings that might well have been composed with the aim of presentation at some of the Colleges or convents connected with the University. But whether or not that was the motive for his writing them, they are full of life and interest, and were they presented, they would surely have made a lasting impression on those who heard them.

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(1) In 1390 the clerics connected with the *Sainte-Chapelle* played before the King the mystery of the Resurrection. In 1396, at Nevers, the city-officials (*échevins*) contributed twenty pounds tournois to help in the developing of a play on the Passion. Cfr Sepet, *Le drame religieux au moyen âge*, p. 11 ff. Paris, 1903.

One of these dialogues, written in the allegoric style of Gerson, repeats a lesson that he often advanced, and of which we have spoken above. Reason in the guise of a school-mistress gives an instruction to each of the senses, and to the heart as well, and urges them to keep well their lessons in mind. But no sooner does Reason leave the senses and the heart alone than they plan to revolt from her authority, but so cleverly as to entice her to the School of Iniquity. Fortunately, Conscience intervenes, recalls Reason and exposes the projects of the rebellious senses and heart (1). Penances are administered and order restored. The practice so cleverly taught is no more than that of the daily examination of conscience, but the device that is used is of an unusual ingenuity. We cannot say for certain that this piece was acted, but there is no doubt but that it would lend itself very easily to the stage.

Another dialogue, — that of a worldling with an ascetic, offers proof of Gerson's power of adaptability (2). In the introduction to this tract, he declares that his purpose in choosing the form of dialogue was that his teaching might be the better understood by simple souls (3). The theme that he develops in beautiful language is that of the conversion of a worldling to a life of prayer. A brief excerpt follows :

> *Worldly Heart.* « Pray, tell me, Solitary Heart, why you keep in this desert place, and how you can live thus hidden away from the world, without the companionship and the consolation of others ? Is it not a bit melancholy and sad ? »
>
> *Solitary Heart.* « I assure you, Worldly Heart, that I am not in the slightest degree sad, but keep joyful and free. »
>
> *Worldly Heart.* « But whence comes the joy that you can have here. You are solitary, and love is between many, (*amor inter plures*). »

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(1) IV, 830-834 : *Dialogue of the Heart, Conscience, Reason and the Five Senses.* This dialogue may be found in the French in Ms. fr. 25,551, Bibl. Nat.

(2) III, 868-887 : *Spiritual Conferences.*

(3) III, 868 : « afin que nostre doctrine soit plaisant et plus comprenable par les simples cuers espirituels,.. nous introduirons nostre matiere en guise de dialogue. »

Solitary Heart. « I tell you, Worldly Heart, that you cannot perceive what thrills me within. »

Worldly Heart. « Why not then ? Do you think that I am blind, without eyes to see, or that I am without understanding. The world judges me wise, but you seem to think me foolish. »

Solitary Heart. « Let God answer for me by the words of His prophet : *homo cum in honore esset, non intellexit...* He who does not strive to lift himself up to God, to know, love, praise and honor Him is like an animal, without understanding, who lives only for the pleasure of his body, and acts as if he was not made to the image and likeness of God (1). »

Thus the dialogue develops in three scenes, representing three distinct conversations between the worldling and the ascetic. Gerson uses the opportunity to proffer one of his theories on the spiritual life, wherein he likens the passions of sorrow, hope, pity, fear and joy to notes of the gamut and speaks of the Canticle of the Heart which is to pass from the doleful chant of sorrow for sin to a hymn of joy in the Lord (2). This feature of the tract detracts not a little from the animation and the color that it would otherwise have. It is possible notwithstanding, that Gerson wrote the dialogue, intending that it should be presented. The division of the plot into days was not uncommon, since in 1450, Arnoul Greban, a Theologian of the University, composed a Mystery divided into four days (3). Other Theologians more near to the time of Gerson were composing Mysteries that were to be presented in several days (4). There are no records however of the dialogue of Gerson ever being played, so we have to content ourselves with the hypothesis which would seem from internal testimony to be well enough founded.

Kindred to the dialogues was the poetic talent of the man.

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(1) III, 869.

(2) This device for teaching Mystical Theology is quite personal to Gerson. From the psychologic view-point it is not without interest. There are people to whom colors suggest sound. To Gerson sound indicated emotion.

(3) Sepet, *o. c.*, p. 36.

(4) *Ibid.*

He has written much verse that from the view-point of style is quite commonplace, a failing which some of the critics of his day were quick to remark. But for all that, the thought that he expressed in his verses was always edifying, and this was the object that he set for himself (1). Two of his poems have a value as illustrating to what heights he could mount when he sang on a subject near to his heart. Thus he tells of his devotion to Theology in a poem entitled : *Epithalamium mysticum Theologi et Theologiae* (2). He expresses his hopes for the spiritual welfare of the young students of the University in poetic form under the title : *Ut Lilia crescant* (3). But the poem wherein he mounts to greatest heights is one that is not included amongst his printed works, — it is a hymn to the Virgin Mary, composed, as the manuscript tells us, by the Chancellor of Paris (4). In it Gerson invokes the Blessed Mother as « my Life and my Love », « my Peace and my Light», « Virgin, Queen and Mother » and begs her to help him grow in the Love of his Lord before he die (5). The poetry and the dia-

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(1) Gerson himself remarks, IV, 540 that his perse was criticised.

« Vidit livor edax, ut mea carmina
Despexit, nitida veste carent, ait. »

Feret, *o. c.*, vol. IV quotes this verse from Gerson, and comments : « franchement le critique n'avait pas tort. » Gerson, however expresses his ideal thus :

« Carmen tale cano, sit procul ethica,
Mendax musa strepat his, quibus est Venus,
Aut Mars deliciae, vanaque numina,
Noster solus amor Jesus. »

(2) III, 684-685.

(3) III, 1439-1440.

(4) Ms. fr. 12,581, fol. 372, « laquelle li chancelier de Paris fist. »

(5) *Ibid.* Cfr. Feret, *o. c.*, vol. IV, pp. 270-271, quotes in part as follows :

« Estoile de mer,
A mon cuer amer,
Ne soiez amere.
Daigniez lantamer
A vos bien amer,
Ma tres douce mere.
. . . . . .
Je cri a vostre huis.
Si comme je puis
Besoigns me amainne
Grans est mes annuiz. »
. . . . . .

« Donez moi lamor
De mon bon seigneur
Avant que je muire.
Que il toute error
Par sa grant doucor
Vueille en moi destruire.
Gardez malamort
De lannemi fort ;
Qu'il ne me puist nuire
Mais a secur port,
O joie, o deport,
Me doigniez conduire. Amen. »

logues composed by Gerson show him in the most natural attitudes, and help us, perhaps best of all his writings, to catch a sympathetic glimpse of his character. They prove him to have been fully concerned about his own progress in the interior life. Nothing was of greater concern to him than that he advance in the Love of God, and at the same time be of some aid in leading others to live in that same Love.

It is thus difficult to catalogue the mystical writings of the man. He did, indeed, write much that was clearly directed to excite in those who read him a longing for the mystical life of union with God. But there is hardly a tract or a sermon that has not an under-current of the same spirit, that is not a challenge to good-will and a call upon the men of his day to set their standards right and to live for the things that count most. His ideal was the one that he expressed in his *Ode to the Virgin*; it was the one that he hoped his fellow-men would live for. His example and his life, as well as his writing and his exhortation, were directed to the one end, that all men would have the Love of God before they died.

CHAPTER II

GERSON AND THE MYSTICS OF HIS DAY

In any age or time, the things that men do are prompted by the things that they think. Philosophy of life is influenced by Philosophy of mind. Thus, is realized the word of the Scriptures : « As a man thinketh himself in his heart, so is he. » Schools of thought, as they succeed one another, leave a clear impress on the conduct and on the ideals, not alone of the adepts who understand and appreciate the system in vogue, whatever it may be, but the less cultured and the unlettered, — though they catch but faint glimmerings of the teachings,— are quick to follow them to their logical sequence. Thus, in our own day, we witness a growing sense of indifference to the claims of religion, the triumph of individualism, and a certain decay of virtue, — fruits of the evolutionistic and rationalistic Philosophies of the Nineteenth Century. It was thus that Europe of the Eighteenth Century felt the effect of the doctrines of the Associationist Philosophy of England. The « back to nature » cry of Rousseau made for forgetfulness of God, and the atheism of the Encyclopedists, once it permeated the crowd, resulted in the placing of the Goddess of Reason in the sanctuary of Notre Dame.

Similarly, in the Fourteenth Century, the Philosophies that were taught were not without effect upon the lives of the people. Particularly was this true in the Valley of the Rhine, where influences other than those of orthodox Scholastics had long been at play. At the time when Thomism was conquering the teachings of the Averroists and the Neo-Platonists in France and in Italy, these doctrines had great following amongst the German Philosophers. Siger of Brabant († ca 1282), Witelo († 1270), Thierry of Freiburg († 131?) and Eckhart († 1327)

were German in their birth or in their spirit (1). So too, the errors that were to arise from their teaching were for the most part German, and were limited for the most to the German countries. But they were not without exerting an influence over all the West, and the Beghards whose teaching approached nearest to the pantheism of the Neo-Platonists were condemned at the Council of Vienna in 1312 (2).

According to the wording of the condemnation, the Beghards held that it was possible to attain absolute perfection in this life. Having arrived at such a stage, the perfect Beghard was immune from all the restrictions which the Church places upon her subjects. The exercise of the virtues and the observance of fasts was for the imperfect alone since thus it was calculated to aid them in the ascent to perfection. But once one stood on the heights, one became a law unto himself. There was no sin for the soul that believed itself in union with God (3).

Eckhart, who is commonly held to be the father of German mysticism. and who may be considered the founder of German philosophy as well, was affected by the teaching of these heretics (4). Not that he sympathized with them. On the contrary he set out to contradict them. But he started from the same philosophical principles as they (5), and was unfortunate enough to follow the trend of their reasoning to such an extent that two years after his death, Pope John XXII thought it advisable to censor certain propositions taken from his writings and amongst the twenty-eight sentences that were con-

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(1) De Wulf, *o. c.*, Vol. II, pp. 107-118 ; Gilson, *o. c.*, pp. 194-203, 299-303.

(2) Cfr the eight propositions condemned in Denzinger-Bannwart, *Enchiridium symbolorum et definitionum*, nos 399-406. Freiburg in Breisgau ; Vernet, articles : *Beghards*, *Béguines heterodoxes*, and *Frères du libre esprit*, in the *Dict. th. Cath.*, vol. II, cols 528-535, vol. VI, cols 800-809.

(3) Vernet, *Dict. th. Cath.*, vol. II, cols 531 ff.

(4) Denifle, *Archiv für Litteratur und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters*, vol. II, pp. 417-631, tries to clear Eckhart of much of the accusation of pantheism, but he has to admit that though the errors were not so pronounced as had been alleged, Eckhart erred none the less.

(5) Garrigou-Lagrange in *La vie spirituelle*, 1923, tome IV, *Études et Documents*, pp. 59-60; De Wulf, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 40, note 2; pp. 107, 125.

demned may be found several that have not only the flavor but the substance also of the pantheism of the Beghards (1). Insistence on the return of created things to the Divinity, and too great desire to apply the intuitional powers of the soul to the search for God gave inlet to all sort of individualizing tendencies which for want of proper guidance quickly descended into error. It was thus that the Fraticelli started, thus the Brethren of Free Spirit recruited their strength, thus too with the Waldensians and the Flagellants (2). But there was a special danger in the heresy of the Beghards in that it was philosophical. The chief teachings of the Neo-Platonists of the Third Century had been monistic, and a confusion of the finite in the infinite resulted. Nothing but the Divinity existed (3). And while Eckhart and his followers of the Fourteenth Century were outspoken in declaring that creature was distinct from Creator, neither the name of Eckhart nor those of Tauler and Suso have been free from the imputations of pantheism (4).

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(1) Denzinger-Bannwart, *o. c.*, nos 500-527; Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. II, pp. 326, quotes some of the statements condemned. It seems clear that Eckhart talked of a union of identity. Recent studies by G. Théry, O. P. in *La Vie Spirituelle*, 1924, tome IX, (*Études et Documents*) and more particularly by O. Karrer, *Meister Eckehart. Das system seiner religiösen Lehre une Lebensweisheit*, Munich 1926, and *Meister Eckeharts Rechtfertigungsschrift* (in the composition of which H. Piesch collaborated) Erfurt, 1927, have revived the problems of the orthodoxy of Eckhart and the justice of his condemnation. Karrer claims that Eckhart never departed from the orthodox teaching of Augustine and Saint Thomas. The condemnation becomes the machination of Scotists, anxious to hurt the prestige of Thomas; the propositions that were condemned do not represent the teaching of the man. This thesis, however much stir it may make, is not at present accepted by such as Grisar (*Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique*, 1927, tome XXIII, pp. 375-377) or Grabmann. (*Divus Thomas*, 1927, tome V, pp. 74-96). Grabmann's article is in the form of a criticism of the theses of Théry and Karrer both, as the title indicates: *Neue Eckhartforschungen im Lichte neuer Eckhartfunde, Bemerkungen zu O. Karrers und G. Therys O. P. Eckhartarbeiten.* New discoveries of works of Eckhart have been made by Grabmann, and he, basing his argument upon these, concludes that contrary to the theory of Karrer the findings of Denifle are exact, and that unwittingly, though it may have been the doctrines of Eckhart do not always hold the path of orthodoxy.

(2) Gerson himself mentions self-confidence as the prime fault of the heretics. Cfr III, 245; I, 48, and other texts cited above Chapter VII, p. 122.

(3) De Wulf, *o. c.*, vol. II, pp. 107, 125.

(4) X. de Hornstein, *Les grands mystiques allemands du* XIVe *siècle, Eckart, Tauler, Suso*, Freiburg in Switzerland, 1922, studies the whole

There is no doubt that the heresy of the Beghards was very widespread in their day. The condemnation of Vienna had not been enough to suppress them and preaching such as that of the great Dominican School of the Fourteenth Century could not stem the tide of zealots that were drawn to their doctrines. Various incidents helped the spread. The opposition of Pope John XXII to Louis the Bavarian, the hard experience of living under interdict and the uncertainties of the Schism all added strength to the Beghards. But their chief asset was that they answered the demand for union with God and pretended to guide fervent souls in the paths of mysticism.

From the philosophic viewpoint there was nothing to oppose the error. In the late Fourteenth Century, in Germany as in France, the thought was almost completely colored by Nominalism, and there might be found in the methods commonly used in the Schools reason for the characteristic charge of « word-battling » with which Scholasticism is frequently accused. If the logic of their position helped the people of the Rhine to fall into the errors of the Beghards, the Occamistic Logic as taught in the Schools gave countenance to attitudes of indifference and lack of conviction that were certainly as bad as the heresy that Neo-Platonism brought in. The mentality of the scholars in Paris was eclectic, as we have seen, (1) and most other Universities were marked with the same tendencies. It has been said that if we wish to understand the mysticism of any epoch, we must seek to know the thought of that epoch, especially when it is moulded and given out by the mystics themselves (2). Certainly, then, one is warranted in inferring from the turmoil of thought and the endless fluctuation of Occamism to the distracted condition of mysticism in those days.

Perhaps the best condemnation we could have of the evils wrought by the philosophy in vogue is to be gained from Gerson's dissatisfaction with the whole system and his effort to bring about a return towards Realism. This we have al-

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controversy as to the orthodoxy of the three Dominican mystics, and opposes the charges of Delacroix, etc. with refutations made by Denifle and Mandonnet ; Puyol, *o. c.*, pp. 375-376.

(1) Chapter V, pp. 82-83.

(2) Auger, *o. c.*, p. 23.

ready witnessed in his demand for the reform of the method of teaching at the University (1). We know that his own training was had at the hands of Occamists. We are aware that he could not, no more than anyone else, entirely cast off the influence which Occamism had upon his early thought, nor shake himself free from its tutelage. But though his training and the whole tradition of his learning was Nominalistic, Gerson was a Realist in his Theology and in his mysticism (2). Conscious that the heresy and the false mysticism could not well be overcome as long as there was a system of Philosophy in vogue that catered to self-assertion in Science and made Faith seem unreasonable, he determined to check the popularity of that system (3). As Chancellor of the University he was protector of the Faith. He saw how religion was becoming more and more ego-centric, how not only the nations but individuals also were tending to revolt from the traditional authority that for centuries had guided all alike. He saw Nominalism bear its fruit in an intellectualism that led to a stolid Quietism in the instance of the Beghards, and in an emotionalism that prompted the heresies of the Flagellanti and became a stimulant for a host of revelations and visions (4). The standards of the time, amongst scholars notably, were patently wrong. One could not cut away from the thought of the past, as the successors of Occam had done, and not imperil the safety of every other human institution. One could not separate religion from Philosophy as the Nominalists did and not give occasion for the queer vagaries that were to become manifest in both fields. Some one had to call a halt before the scholars became confirmed in their doubting attitudes and the misguided mystics, for want of the control and advice of the learned, did harm to the faithful.

Gerson set himself to effect the change, and the means that he chose to use was the teaching of Mystical Theology to his classes at the University (5). Instead of devoting his effort to

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(1) Chapter V.

(2) Bess, *Gerson, Joh. Charlier*, article in the *Realencyklopädie*, vol. VI, p. 613, Leipzig, 1899 ; Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 311 ; Gilson, *o. c.*, p. 281.

(3) I, 110-111.

(4) Dewulf, *o. c.*, vol. II, pp. 188-189. Cfr Gerson, *Opera*, vol. I, 37-59.

(5) He stated the purpose of his lectures in III, 368 : « Expedit scho-

the discussion of curious questions as did the majority of the professors, he started to unfold for his hearers the science of the interior life. Instead of building up, as they sought to do, a whole new body of learning that would exercise the mental agility of those who tried to understand it, he harked back to the systems of the doctors of the great Thirteenth Century, — to that of Bonaventure especially, — and directed his lessons to the hearts rather than to the heads of those who came to hear him (1). Where the men of the Schools divorced Theology from Philosophy, he attempted to put them in concord (2). Where they aimed at intellectual acumen, he worked to develop moral strength and religious humility (3). Against a Quietism that was founded upon self-satisfaction he tried to train the will of his hearers to be satisfied with nothing less than God, and to stride constantly to the Mountain of Desire which is the Love of God.

The Age of Gerson was, as has been remarked, full of appeal, not alone to the mystic but to the mysterious (4). When learned Doctors of the Universities fell a prey to the desire to read into the future, and looked to the stars as holding in their motion the destinies of mankind what must have been the mentality of the unlettered ! With the fear of the

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lasticos viros etiam devotionis expertos in scripturis devotis theologiae mysticae diligenter exerceri, dummodo credant eis... Quis autem appropinquavit igni, et vestimenta ejus non ardeant. Rursus alius fructus est pro illis, quos praedicatio sumpta ab hujusmodi doctrina poterit accendere ad amorem Dei... Denique compertum est multos habere devotionem, sed non secundum scientiam, quales procul dubio pronissimi sunt ad errores. »

(1) I, 177.

(2) IV, 54 : « Et quoniam nostrum hactenus studium concordare theologiam hanc mysticam cum nostra scholastica,... » Thus Gerson spoke in 1429. Cfr also I, 92, cited above p. 82.

(3) This is the whole theme of the lectures on Vain Curiosity, which led up to the conferences on Mystical Theology as the remedy for the conditions that he was criticising. Thus : I, 106 : « Intelligentia clara et sapida eorum quae creduntur ex Evangelio, quae vocatur theologia mystica, conquirenda est magis per poenitentiam quam per solam humanam investigationem. »

(4) Chapter VII, p. 117 ff. Cfr I, 40 : « Magna pars christianorum ad has visiones ideo placentiores quia recentiores converterent. » I, 114 : « Fuerunt tempore Hubertini illius haereses... ab abbate Joanne,... pullulantes etiam ad tempora nostra. »

people aggravating as each new calamity succeeded the last one and with the thought of death becoming more and more present to all, it is not surprising if many were taken with an impulse to mysticism, and since capable guides were few it is not strange that some went astray. Simultaneously with the spread of the new devotions that afforded an outlet to the pent-up feelings of the bulk of the people came a host of private revelations as to the coming of Antichrist or the end of the Schism (1). There were, at the time, great visionaries of whom God saw fit to make use. The pity is that the prophecies and revelations of Sts. Catherine of Siena and Bridget of Sweden were not better listened to (2). But it was types such as Joachim of Flora, Telesphorus and even Hubertinus of Casala whose prophecies had wide circulation and whose influence was not for the best (3). Other visionaries even less known than these claimed the attention and the reverence of the people for utterances which were far more human than divine in their source. There were those who feared to doubt for an instant anything or anyone that claimed heavenly sanction, and as visions multiplied and became not infrequently contradictory it became difficult to maintain an equilibrium amidst them all (4).

It was because of this phenomena that Gerson wrote much on the manner of judging visions (5). His teaching was timely and his direction sage. It was necessary, he said, that the life as well as the words of the person revealing be scrutinized. The doctrinal worth of the revelations should, he claimed, be tried by comparison with known truths. « It would be per-

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(1) Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, pp. 166 ff.

(2) Gerson himself was skeptical as to the worth of their teaching. According to the principles that he laid down for the discernment of spirits, one was to doubt always and be especially careful when it was question of revelations made by women. I, 15.

(3) Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 169.

(4) I, 82 : « Addo nunc id quod evenit de tempore meo de quadam quae prophetissa et miraculorum operatrix reputata est a multis... Dies mihi non sufficeret, si numerare vellem innumeras tales insanias amantium, immo et amentium, quia non secundum scientiam. »

(5) I, 40 : « Hinc alia ratio quod omisso divinarum scripturarum studio magna pars Christianorum ad has visiones ideo placentiores quia recentiores converterent oculos et aures prurientes. »

verse to ask us to accept as coming from the Mouth of God, and therefore to be believed with the certainty of Faith, all the visions that go on multiplying to extraordinary limits. Because of that tendency, our religion, which, according to St. Augustine was meant to be contained in the small compass of the Sacraments is made more difficult than was the Old Dispensation (1). » Gerson was suspicious of all revelation and especially that which originated with women (2). What irritated him most was, no doubt, the spectacle of Religious Orders of men under the direction of an Abbess. For he could not tolerate anything that would belittle the priesthood and make the minister the spiritual son of the one ministered to, much less could be accept calmly the mentality that looked each day for new visions and that never expressed a command without it was inspired by God (3). It must not be thought that he was blind to the fact that God uses women as well as men to be the agents of his Providence. He was fully aware of the good that was done by « women whom God called to privileged sanctity » (4). But the times were extraordinary. Emotionalism caused much self-deception and there were many whose conduct matched that of women cited by Gerson one of whom claimed to be one of five messengers sent by God and said that she could read the sins of all men

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(1) I, 40 : « Perversum esset, ne dicamus vánum, visiones super visiones in immensum multiplicantes debere recipere tanquam ab ore Dei prolatas ac deinde certissima fide credendas. Sicque demum nostra fides nostraque religio quam Deus testante Augustino sub paucissimis voluit continere sacramentis redderetur plus absque ulla comparatione quam lex vetus onerosa. »

(2) I, 15, Gerson says that all word or writing of women must be held suspect. « Omnis doctrina mulierum maxime solemnis verbo vel scripto reputanda est suspecta, nisi prius fuerit altero sex modorum diligenter examinata, et multo amplius quam in doctrina virorum. »

(3) I, 14 : « Culpat Hieronymus eos qui discunt (proh dolor !) a feminis quod viros doceant. Quid si talis sexus apposuerit ambulare in magnis et mirabilibus super se, visiones quotidie super visiones addere,... nihil denique dicere nisi vice Dei, sine medio revelantis : appellare sacerdotes Deo filios suos ; docere eos professionem suam in qua nutriuntur assidue, etc. »

(4) I, 15 : « Neque tamen ista dicentes, derogemus gratiae Dei, neque mulierum quas elegit privilegiatae sanctitati... »

written on their foreheads (1). There was indeed need for the discretion that he advised.

Withal it must be admitted that though the rules made by Gerson were wise, he was hasty in passing judgment on the worth of the revelations of his day. In 1423, when he looked back over the years preceding the Schism he seems to blame Catherine of Siena, and Bridget of Sweden for causing the Pope to leave France and thus become the occasion for the Schism (2). He mentions neither one by name, but he refers to the circumstance of the return and « recalls » that Pope Gregory XI regretted that he had heeded the visions recounted to him. We know that the cause of the canonization of Bridget of Sweden was introduced at the Council of Constance, and that though the Council accepted the decision of Boniface IX it was not without some who dissented (3). So that the Swedes asked the Council of Basle for its approval, also, in order to make certain of the approbation of all Christianity. The objection that was usually had against the canonization of the Saint was exactly that which made Gerson pause. He was one of those who urged that her revelations be censored (4). It is even possible that there was a grain of nationalism, or, to say it better, a remnant of the partisanship of the great Schism in the matter. For though Gerson was most difficult in applying his standards to others, he seems to have had no difficulty in making up his mind as to the revelations of St. Joan of Arc (5).

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(1) I, 20 : « Haec mulier sub pallio devotionis et revelationis fingebat mirabilia. Astruebat enim se esse unam de quinque foeminabus *(sic)* missis a Deo, compassive pro redimendis innumeris animabus de inferno... Sciebat videndo frontem peccata quae fecerat unusquisque... Nuper autem cum spiritus almus... hunc spiritum falsum detegere vellet; haec mulier capta et poenis ut torqueretur est addicta, quae omnem veritatem confessa est, qualiter praedicta cupiditatis occasione finxisset ut hoc modo se nutriret. »

(2) I, 16 : « Gregorius XI testis fuit idoneus sed tardus nimis. Hic positus in extremis,... protestatus est ut caveant ab hominibus,... sub specie religionis loquentibus visiones sui capitis, quia per tales ipse seductus. »

(3) Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol VII, pp. 184-185. St. Bridget had been canonized by Boniface IX in 1391.

(4) I, 38 : « Approbare enim falsas et illusorias visiones aut frivolas visiones pro veris et solidis,... quid alienius ab hoc sacrosancto concilio. » As usual Gerson fears to give countenance to false visionaries.

(5) IV, 865.

In the exercise of his functions as Chancellor, he was scrupulous to detect and correct error. We have seen how vigorous he was in his opposition to the heresy and superstition that put in appearance in his day. In like manner did he keep check on the teaching of mystics, and while in his teaching and preaching he often took occasion to recommend works of piety and devotion, he lost no chance to warn the students and the religious who frequented the University against the dangers of consulting too freely the opinions of others (1). In his mysticism as in his Theology he was faithful to the old masters and was loath to receive any additions to their spiritual bequest. But for all that he kept in contact with the different Schools and congregations. He knew and appreciated the worth of the writings of the Rhine School, and if he did not recommend them all it was because of the connection of their teaching with the ideas of the Beghards (2). With the spirit of the Franciscan mysticism he was very familiar and sympathetic. But that did not make him amenable to everything that came under the name of Franciscan, and he warned his students against the dangers that lurked in a tract of Hubertinus of Casala (3). He was an admirer of St. Bernard also, yet he criticised a work that went under the name of the Saint (4). What he watched for and opposed were those tendencies which would give countenance to the heresies that were current and which would lend themselves to wrong interpretation. It was in that mind and for that reason that he issued a criticism of the work entitled *The Preparation for Mystical Marriage*, by John Ruysbroeck (5).

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(1) I, 97 : « Signum curiosae singularitatis est fastidire doctrinas resolutas et plene discussas et ad ignotas vel non examinatas velle converti. »

(2) He did however commend a work of Suso that had attained great popularity not only in Germany but in France as well, viz. the tract on *Eternal Wisdom*. Cfr III, 883, also III, 572.

(3) I, 114.

(4) III, 1125 : « Velim praeterea commonuisse, ut de hac materia caute legatur Bernardus : *Ad fratres de monte Dei.* » This, in an address to religious while Gerson was still a student (1393).

(5) I, 59-63 : *Epistola ad fratrem Bartholomaeum Carthusiensem super tertia parte libri Joannis Ruysbroeck : De ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum.* This tract will be referred to as the « Mystical Marriage », a term which we think translates best the idea of Ruysbroeck.

As the Brethren of the Common Life went about and as the contagion of their example began to be felt not alone in the Low-Countries, but in Germany and, to an extent, in France, a certain reaction set in against them which found its impetus with some of the well established Orders (1). With this Gerson had no part. But there was a phase of the activity of the Brethren that held his attention and, perhaps, aroused for a time his scruples. That was their interest in the popularity of the mystical writings of Ruysbroeck. Of course, the first demand for the spread of these works did not come from the Brethren, since already, in the lifetime of Ruysbroeck, translations which had been made from the Flemish into Latin were scattered as far as the Alps (2). Ruysbroeck had written for the people whom he wished to protect against the false doctrines and practices of the Brethren of the Free Spirit who, under the leadership of one Bloemardine, a woman-visionary, were very powerful and exerting an influence dangerous to the Faith in Brabant (3). One of the tracts which were leveled against the errors of these was the *Mystical Marriage*, which because of its opportuneness had a wide circulation (4).

It was, perhaps, during his stay in Bruges that Gerson had his attention called to this tract that was the admiration of all who read it. It was said, with the simplicity that marked the time, that the author of the work had no learning, and all that the work contained was, thus, the fruit of divine inspiration (5). To object against the truth and the exactitude of the doctrines contained became, then, much harder. But none the less he risked a criticism. At Bruges, he had no doubt

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(1) Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 165 ; K. Grube, *Gerhard Groote und seine Stiftungen*, pp. 80-84, Cologne, 1883.

(2) *Œuvres de Ruysbroeck l'admirable*, translated and ed. by the Benedictines of Saint-Paul de Wisques, vol. III, *Introduction*, pp. 8-10. The first translation was made, in 1358, by William Jordaens. Gerard Groote made a translation at a later date. Thomas à Kempis made a third translation.

(3) Gerson himself mentions Marie of Valenciennes, who was connected with the heresy of the Beghards, I, 55. Margaret Ebner was another whose name was connected with heretical teaching.

(4) *Œuvres de Ruysbroeck*, vol. III, p. 7.

(5) I, 59 : « Tradunt quidem, ut accepi, quod praefatum librum idiota unus sine litteris composuit. Exinde non sine miraculo et inspiratione divina ipsum fuisse confectum patenter astruunt : ex quo consequens esset omnia contenta in eodem esse verissima sanctissimaque. »

come into contact with many members of the religious congregations there assembled, and for the benefit of one Bartholomew, a Carthusian in one of the convents near the city, he wrote out his appreciation of the work of Ruysbroeck.

In his criticism, he did not question the sincerity of the writer. He did however hesitate as to the amount of good that the work would accomplish. The first and second parts, which dealt with the active and spiritual life were valuable indeed, but the third part which was a brief study of the contemplative life seemed to bear a taint of the errors of the Beghards, whom, admittedly, Ruysbroeck was combating (1). But, consciously or unconsciously, he had slipped into the terminology of those whom he condemned and there were to be found sentences, which, though they could be properly explained and interpreted, had in them, none the less, the suggestion of the heresy (2). The intention of the author Gerson did not dispute. His mind was on the manifold readers, most of whom had not the theological sense to discriminate between the true and the false. So sincere an opponent of error was he that he did not want to leave open any door that might afford entrance to heresy. So he condemned this third part of the *Mystical Marriage* as capable of fomenting error in the minds of those who read it. This letter of the Chancellor was written at Paris, shortly after his departure from Bruges in the year 1401 (3). It was not the first time that Ruysbroeck's work had been criticised. Almost twenty years

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(1) Gerson recalls that the Beghards were wide-spread at the time of Ruysbroeck. The printed text of Dupin would have him say that Ruysbroeck was himself one of the heretics. « erat autem de secta Beghardorum ». But the manuscript copy has a line over the third letter so that the word becomes « erant », and indicates not Ruysbroeck but the sect of the Beghards. Cfr Auger, o. c., p. 252, note 1.

(2) I, 60 : « Quod si deficit auctor in explicando sicut palam aut errat aut deficit, sibi imputet qui non solum litteratis doctisque, sed indoctis etiam et rudibus taliter locutus est. Sed neque admirari vel indignari quispiam debet, neque de temerario judicio arguere eos qui legentes eum, praesertim imbuti in sacris litteris, intentionem suam ex verbis colligunt... »

(3) It is even possible that the letter of Gerson was written at the suggestion of d'Ailly in whose diocese Groenendael was situated. For d'Ailly was to call upon the monks of Groenendael, later on, (1411) to aid in repressing the heresy of the « men of Intelligence ». Cfr Auger, o. c., p. 153, note.

previously some of the Brethren of the Common Life had become agitated at the criticism lanced against the same tract by learned Doctors of Theology in the Valley of the Rhine, which criticism they said, « hurt their prestige not a little » (1).

But if the Brethren of the Common Life were disturbed by the attacks against the orthodoxy of the man whom they revered almost as a father, — as indeed he was the father of Flemish mysticism, — the Canons Regular of Groenendael who were the spiritual sons of Ruysbroeck were much perturbed by the charges. They felt that the attack was unwarranted, that the passages which were called into question could be explained, and that their founder could be proved orthodox. So it was that Schoonhoven, the pupil and the successor of the mystic as Head of the monastery, took up the defense of his master (2). He aimed to show how the teaching of Ruysbroeck was in accord with that of the best of the mystics, and to that end he quoted passages from Bernard and Hugh of Saint-Victor (3). Moreover, he claimed, that in the text cited by Gerson, Ruysbroeck had no intention of talking of a union of identity of the soul with God, as was evident from the context of all his works, and from the combat that he waged against such teaching. If there was any suggestion of error in the Latin text of the work it was the fault of the translator and not of the author himself (4). In the course of this defense, Schoonhoven gives vent to the opposition that had, perhaps, arisen in the North against the claims of the Theologians to sit in judgment on the orthodoxy of declarations that had every sign of being inspired (5). With not a

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(1) Auger, *o. c.*, p. 250.

(2) I, 63-78 : *Libellus fratris Joannis de Schoenhavia, qui nititur defendere quaedam dicta fratris Joannis Ruysbroeck, contra Magistrum Joannem Gerson.*

(3) Amongst, the authorities cited by Schoonhoven were Bernard, Gilbert de la Porrée, Hugh of Saint-Victor, Thomas of Aquin, Richard of Saint-Victor and Pseudo-Denys.

(4) I, 67 : « Si ergo stilus libri in latinum translati magis redoleat humanam eloquentiam quam divinam, hoc non est imputandum auctori sed translatori. »

(5) I, 63 : « Idcirco ut veritas hujus doctrinae, quam a Spiritu sancto arbitror effluxisse et emanasse, qui magister est veritatis et non erroris, planius elucescat,... »

little irony, he remarked that the knowledge of Physics and the Natural Sciences was not necessary before one could be inspired by Grace, and that a simple person with no appreciation of the sciences could all the more readily enjoy the gift of contemplation. « In matters such as can be known only by experience, we must prefer the testimony of those who have tasted and seen to that of men whose theorizing is the fruit of study alone (1). » For the rest, he declares that he submits to the teaching of the Church and that he reverences the life, the knowledge and the virtue of the Chancellor of the University as being high above his own. But his conviction that the writing in question was inspired gave him courage to respond to the objections of so great a man as Gerson (2).

When word of the refutation of Schoonhoven was brought to his attention Gerson hesitated a while before he took up the charge (3). There was little to be gained by controversy. But he wrote finally to explain his stand to Brother Bartholomew. To his way of thinking there was to be no question of the intention of the author, but of the meaning that could be taken from his words. The tract of Ruysbroeck was being placed in the hands of many, of all ages and conditions ; yet when these were reading and discussing the doctrines, Theologians and those best equipped to understand and judge of the worth of the teaching were prohibited from expressing their opinion (4). As long as the man's writings and ideas were limited in appeal they could be tolerated. But when they took on a

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(1) I, 77 : « Et ergo non mihi videntur recte sapere qui nolunt quod aliquis de divinis scientiis disserat, nisi fuerit physicis et naturalibus scientiis praeditus et imbutus. » « In tali enim materia quae solum per experientiam et gustum cognoscitur, magis est credendum his qui notitia experimentali haec gustaverunt quam his qui solo lumine intellectus et litterarum studio pollent. »

(2) I, 78 : « Non potui patienter sustinere ut liber quem per Spiritum Sanctum fuisse compilatum vilipenderetur, abjiceretur et contemptui haberetur. »

(3) The letter of Schoonhoven was written in 1406, « twenty-five years after the death of Ruysbroeck » (I, 67). Gerson did not reply until after 1408.

(4) I, 79 : « Ita videlicet nunc publicabuntur scriptis, nunc verbis idioma vulgare servantibus et apud simplices adolescentulos, apud senes hebetes, apud illiteratam plebeculam, apud anus decrepitas, nunc

larger influence and threatened the Catholic doctrine action had to be taken (1). What Gerson was most afraid of was a revival of the false mysticism to which the people of the North had been a prey over so long a period. To explain his objection in an impersonal way, he quoted from the records of a Chapter of the Carthusians held in the year 1406, or 1408, which condemned just those tendencies to which the reading of the third part of the *Mystical Marriage* could give rise (2). « Each day's experience tells us, » he wrote, « how dangerous to true religion is false devotion. How many times we are deceived by the external appearance of devotion of those who claim to enjoy mystical states and carry out a whole parade of external proofs of their exaltations. Pride and self-deception carry them away. They have not even the virtues of their state, and to our sorrow we see many who once sought to be revered as prophets give up the Faith entirely. (3) » This passage shows best why Gerson opposed the writing of Ruysbroeck. He was afraid of the interpretations which might be put on just those passages which lacked definiteness. It was all well to point to other sections of the writing of the man. The danger did not rest with him, but with those who read his works. These had to be safeguarded from heresy and false practice. Gerson persisted therefore in his criticism of the third part of the *Mystical Marriage*, and declared furthermore that if he had Schoonhoven at the University of Paris he would hale him before the Faculty of Theology and hold him responsible for defending the tract (4).

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in foro, nunc in angulis ; et viri doctissimi tam ingenio quam exercitio praediti ab aliis recte loquendis, quia scholastici sunt, arcebuntur. »

(1) *Ibid.* : « Tolerent igitur patienter homines inferioris gradus et scientiae, si dicta eorum quaerantur ad proprium usum coarctari, non in perniciem doctrinae catholicae dilatari. »

(2) I, 80 : « Quartam vero devotionem falsam, id est vanam et curiosam illi exercent qui sine mortificatione propriae voluntatis a zelo Domino serviendi, vitam spiritualem credunt consistere in ruminatione vel potius phantasiatione rerum spiritualium ; aestimantes hanc ipsam phantasiationem vel saltem delectationem inde consequentem devotionem esse, etc. »

(3) *Ibid.*

(4) I, 82 : « Si tales locutionum modos publicari perciperem apud almam Universitatem Parisiensem,... deducerem protinus ex officio cui indignus deservio, ad censuram Theologicae Facultatis,... »

Some people of our own time have concluded that Gerson was too hasty in his condemnation, and that he misinterpreted the words of Ruysbroeck (1). Bossuet, building his argument from the charges of Gerson was a confirmed opponent of the Flemish mystic, and had much to do with checking, for a time, the process for his canonization. But judged in the light of his time the opinions of the Chancellor must stand. It was not the mystic but the work or section of a work that he accused. And although Schoonhoven declared that there was nothing in the Flemish text to warrant the accusation made by Gerson, a letter of Gerard Groote which was recently edited by Auger in his study of the *Mysticism in the Low-Countries in the Middle Ages* does not display the same certainty (2). Groote reports two attacks which were made against the orthodoxy of his former friend. He declared that since he had translated the *Mystical Marriage* into Latin it was thrown up against him, and some declared that no faith should be put in any of his teaching. « For my part, » says Groote, « I admit, as I have already remarked to you, that there are many expressions to be changed and even to be deleted from the text of the work, if it be a question of taking them literally » (3). Auger comments on the letter thus : « It is certain that the Flemish expressions merited censure as well as the Latin (4). »

Thus Gerson's charges were not without basis. There was possibility that the readers of the tract would misinterpret the text and support heretical practice with the authority of Ruysbroeck. Already there were too many blind leaders who took

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(1) Altmeyer, *Les précurseurs de la réforme au Pays-Bas*, vol, I, p. 119, Brussels, 1886 ; L. Reypens, *Le sommet de la contemplation mystique*, article in the *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, tome IV, (1923), pp. 256-265. Reypens declares that scant response was made in the community of Groenendael to Gerson's critique. It is none the less true that certain individuals in Brussels were condemned for heresy by d'Ailly, in 1411. Cfr Auger, *o. c.*, p. 153.

(2) *O. c.*, p. 250 ; Id. *De doctrinis et meritis Joannis van Ruysbroeck*, pp. 121, ff., Louvain, 1892.

(3) *Ibid.*

(4) Auger, *Étude sur les mystiques du Pays-Bas*, p. 255 : « Il est sûr que les expressions flamandes méritent aussi la censure ; nous les avons toutes retrouvées dans le texte publié par David. Pour la traduction latine de Surius s'il existe une différence avec l'édition flamande, c'est qu'elle corrige plutôt et les mitige par les ajoutes qu'on ne retrouve pas dans le texte original. »

up with strange penances and external devotions, who would not accept guidance from anyone but were carried away by their false piety. Gerson himself drew a picture of the mysticisms that he condemned (1). There were those who, like the Turlupins, — as the Beghards were styled in France, — « were unable to cope with their own ambition and who fell into the worst of errors by following their own imagination instead of the express Will of God. Some think to rise entirely above their passions, so as live entirely for the spirit, yet Saint Paul tells of the two laws, and of the conflict of the spirit against the flesh. Others strive to enter so into union with God as to be entirely passive to His action upon them. » This Quietism that Gerson mentions with disapproval is that of the Beghards who claimed so close union with the Divinity that all that they accomplished became the fulfillment of the Divine Will in their regard. Any work then that would give countenance to the theories of the heretics ought to be condemned, and the tract of Ruysbroeck since it was so widely spread and since it was found in the hands of people of such varied tastes and aspirations was likely to do much harm in that it failed to give the corrective for the errors to which many, because of their contiguity to the Beghards, would be prone. What the Chancellor was thinking of was the Faith of the people. As he was against anything that would encourage superstition, anything that was extreme in devotion, so he was opposed to all that would give countenance to false mysticism.

This attitude was of course the more pronounced when it was a question of heresy. So close a watch did Gerson keep over the orthodoxy of the people that he soon won the title of « Most Christian Doctor » (2). In his lifetime he was tireless in his pursuit of the heresies of the Beghards, the Brethren of the Free Spirit, the Fraticelli, and any other teaching that

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(1) I, 174 : « Plurimos, crede mihi, fefellit nimia sentimentorum hujusmodi conquisitio seu cupido : hoc in Turelupinis et Beghardis, hoc in quibusdam devotis non secundum scientiam expertum est, qui deliramenta cordis sui pro Dei sentimentis amplexantes turpiter erraverunt. » Cfr I, 55 ; I, 114.

(2) I, CLXXII : « si quis Doctorem christianissimum vocet, is certe videbitur ejus merito ac dignitati... titulum a tribuisse. » This phrase occurs in a letter written in praise of Gerson by Peter Schott of Strasburg, in 1489.

tended to foster a sense of indivualism in religion (1). Recourse to recognized authority was one of the most characteristic gestures of the man. Almost invariably, when he is speaking of the spiritual life, the same expression comes to his lips : Unless a man had a guide he could not avoid error, and unless those who aspired to mount to the mystic states placed their confidence in a director they could not hope even to be saved (2). He would tolerate no innovation, no recourse to religious experience as solely necessary. Illustrative of this conviction is his attitude towards the old masters of the spiritual life. The reverence that he showed to their writings and the fidelity that he maintained in teaching them is the correlative for his fear of innovation. This feeling is the cause, perhaps more than anything else for the want of great originality in the Mystical Theology that he taught. It is another proof of the fidelity of the man to orthodoxy. It shows that, as a reformer, his gaze was fixed on the good things of the past, and that his ambition was to translate faithfully into the language and thoughts of the Schools about him the mystical ideals of the Saint-Victors and of Bonaventure (3).

This is a feature of his activity which those who connect the spirit of Gerson with that of the reformers of the Sixteenth Century would do well to consider. This characteristic more than any personal worth as a mystic made Gerson a most valuable influence on the life of his time. Some scholars who remarked the importance of his work have called him « the St. Thomas of modern spirituality » (4). Others, such as Dean Inge, with an eye to the form of expression, and a tendancy to admire what he outwardly condemns as « externalism », declare that the mysticism of Gerson is « formal and arid » (5).

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(1) Speaking of the tendency of some exalted spirits to go in for all the external phenomena of Mysticism, Gerson remarks : « Patuit et Beghardis et aliis absque numero, quorum scripta legi plurima. »

(2) III, 145, I, 48, cited above, p. 122.

(3) I, 117, ff, I, 119 : « Ego ut de me loquor aliquid, quia me jam res aspicit, mallem vel (ut nullus ambigit) malle deberem studiosos viros dare se totos probatissimis Doctorum precedentium libris intelligendis, quam ipsos sterili ruditate opusculorum meorum tempus atterere. »

(4) Thus Faber, in *Growth in Holiness*, Chapter XVII. Auger, *Les mystiques des Pays-Bas*, p. 251, says : « Gerson was the principal representative of speculative mysticism. »

(5) Inge, *Christian Mysticism*, p. 147

Both appreciations are not a little exaggerated, for although his activity in the field of mysticism was of great importance in the Fifteenth Century, Gerson cannot be classed with the great mystics. There is indeed, as Dean Inge remarks, a certain formalism in some of the writings of the man, but what would he ask of a mysticism that was taught from the rostrum of a Class-room ? Had he read more closely the text of Gerson's tract on Mystical Theology, the Dean would have noticed that one of the precise objects that the Chancellor strove to attain was to relieve mysticism of some of its aridity, — as certainly he must have done if he wanted to attract men to seek consolation in mysticism (1). The busy career that he led at Paris made it difficult for him to devote himself entirely to a life of prayer. But, like many of the great mystics, he was able to harmonize external activity with deep inward peace. He held it the highest degree of spirituality to be able to combine the active with the contemplative life, as did the Apostles (2). And if he did not talk much of his personal experiences it was not because he was not blessed with unusual favors, but rather because he felt unworthy of discussing them (3). His effort was to stimulate others. His own experiences were valuable only in so far as they confirmed the doctrine that he culled from the great mystics. But that he lacked the talent or the desire to give a psychological study of his own spiritual life must not be held against him. There are more ways of being original than that, and we must recognize the service that Gerson did to the men of his generation when he recalled them to a sense of the life they should lead, and pointed out the means they could use to realize it.

The lessons that he read to the students who came to follow his lectures were old lessons indeed. But they had become well-nigh forgotten lessons. Speculative Theology had actually

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(1) III. 363; III, 369.

(2) III, 1237 : « Repletionem primam operatur Spiritus sanctus in activis,... Repletionem alteram operatur... in contemplativis,... et haec melior,... Tertiam vero communicat,... viris heroicis praepollentibus et exercitatis in utraque vita activa simul et contemplativa. »

(3) We have seen in Chapter III that Gerson was directed towards the mystical life by his early training. In 1424, he could speak of his teaching as being the fruit of experience, III, 428.

been turned to bad ends (1). Pride of intellect had driven men long before Gerson's day into false doctrine. From the era of Abelard till the time of John Petit, the number of scholars who had resisted correction and who had persisted in the spread of their cherished notions was great. Separation of the truths of Faith from the findings of Philosophy, and the overthrow of the science of Metaphysics made the scholars live much in the realm of the ego and set their own intellects as the last Court of Appeal. This individualism bore fruit in the ambition and the selfish ideals that actuated many of the learned. The Universities had seen to it that the support of their Doctors be assured and the Church had assented to the reserving of benefices for them (2). But the attainment of the degree meant far more than that to most. It was the beginning of a career. Characteristic, then, of the mentality of the students was the cultivation of the natural virtues, often enough to the detriment of the supernatural (3). When men prepared themselves externally for the dignity to which they aspired and the company in which they hoped to mix, their culture became a sort of veneer that hardly covered the humble origins of most of them. Thus, the purpose for which Colleges were founded and learning dispensed at the University was departed from. Instead of preparing themselves to become earnest and capable exponents of the Faith, the scholars had become a caste apart and an élite that had lost its reason for existing, and which instead of doing good was sowing seeds of discord.

The reason for this was that the professors at the University had failed to inspire their pupils (4). No definite body of learning was being offered ; but a state of mind was cultivated that left all things open to discussion, and made

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(1) III, 387 : « Theologia speculativa literatoria in hoc vel maxime a mystica secernitur, quod prima servire potest vitiis, secunda nequaquam. » Cfr I, 100-106.

(2) Even the Council of Constance in the various Concordats assured that many of the choicest benefices be reserved for scholars. Hefele-Leclercq, o. c., vol. VII, p. 535.

(3) I, 89-90 : « Quam stultum est inquiunt (Mendaces advocati, id est vitia) in hac vita se gratis affligere, et non quaerere sublimes honores. »

(4) I, 111 ; cfr above, p. 77.

Faith a blind adherence to declarations which could find no support in reason. Men were leaving the University with the sanction of their degree to whom even the opinions of St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure were strange (1). The eclecticism of the Occamists had resulted in uncertainty and lack of conviction. But the chief danger was that it set up an idea of knowledge as its own reward.

It is not strange that Gerson reacted against all this, since his standard was to turn all to cultivation of piety. « It is preferable, » he wrote, « to have filial love directed towards God, than to have a keen intellect, but cold and illuminated only by study (2). » Not that he was against learning. Not that, certainly ! But he would supplant the cult of the intellect with the truest wisdom which is the knowledge of self and the Love of God (3).

This, then, was the aim that Gerson had when he began in the year 1394 to lecture to the students at the University of Paris. While his fellow-professors were busy discussing the opinions of Siger of Brabant or Averroes and erecting straw men in order to knock them down, he started patiently to give an orderly course on the *Spiritual Life of the Soul* (4). He laid down as his project to discuss the life and death of the soul, its weaknesses and its failings, — to consider the nature and cause of sin, and to indicate a few conclusions of practical value. Following this, he took up the matter of temptations, and then, when he had well prepared the ground, he discussed his theory on the spiritual life (5). His innovation was a marked departure from the methods then in use at the University.

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(1) Ehrle, *Der Sentenzenkommentar Peters von Candia*, pp. 74 ff. Gerson recalls in many places the scoffing attitude that was had towards the teaching of the « antiqui », I, 104-105 ; IV, 337-338, I, 117.

(2) The passage should be cited in full. I, 62 : « Nullus tamen proprio vocabulo dici debet contemplativus, vel sapiens et perfectus theologus qui prima contemplationis specie caruerit. Vult ergo aliquis esse et dici vere sapiens, habeat utramque contemplationis speciem, illam videlicet affectus quae saporem dat, et illam intellectus quae scientiae luminositatem praestat, ut constituatur sapientia, id est sapida scientia. »

(3) III, 883 : « Car savoir l'art ne souffit mie, qui ne l'exerce et pratique. »

(4) III, 1-77 : *Liber de vita spirituali animae.*

(5) III, 3-4.

But he had the courage and the conviction to make it. Here then is the best gauge of the originality of Gerson. He taught Mystical Theology with the idea of inspiring those in whom lay the hope of the Church with a love other than that of worldly gain. He taught it in the assurance that therein lay the best chance of bringing reform into the Church.

For this reason, and also because the spiritual life and the life of perfection is open to all, Gerson advanced his teaching on mysticism to people not trained in Theology, — his sisters. It has been said that he did not care to open the mystical life to all fervent souls, but that he held it to be limited to a few privileged souls. Thus Pourrat makes a comparison between St. Bernard and Gerson and declares that such was the teaching of the bulk of the mystical writers of the Middle Ages (1). But when he speaks so of Gerson he is far from a true appreciation of the doctrine of the man. Not alone in his tracts for his sisters where he defends his action of writing to ordinary souls on so exalted a subject as mysticism, but throughout all of his tracts he maintains, both in word and in spirit, the same theme that an ordinary soul who performs all duties well, makes proper use of the Sacraments and loves God can rise to the highest degrees of the spiritual life (2).

The reason for this stand is seen in the importance which he attached to love as above knowledge (3). Both could lead to mystical contemplation but whereas knowledge was for the

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(1) II, 408, II, 504 : « Selon la plupart des auteurs spirituels, depuis saint Bernard jusqu'à Gerson, tous les fidèles fervents n'ont pas la vocation mystique. »

(2) III, 547 : « Videmus etiam et vidimus per experientiam in sanctis eremitis et in aliquibus feminis, quod plus profecerunt in amore Dei per istam contemplativam vitam, quam fecerunt vel faciunt plures magni clerici. Ratio quia ista vita melius acquiritur per bonam et simplicem humilitatem. » II, 709, speaking of the system of the *Itinerarium* of St. Bonaventure, Gerson says : « debet omnis Christianus ad illos aspirare, quoniam Theologia talis mystica proprie est Christianorum. »

(3) III, 550 : « Et si ita est, immo quia ita est, patet quod simplex et illiterata persona melius cognoscit Deum amando Eum et in anima ejus opera recolendo,... quam facere potest quantumcumque literatus et philosophus per opera externa. »

IV, 49 : « Amo te, si profertur a creatura rationali Deo suo toto corde, tota mente et tota anima, per pietatem fidei, spei et charitatis, ipsa conjungitur immediate Deo suo. »

learned alone, love was for all, and simple people could succeed by their loving trust where scholars through pride were lost. No one, to his mind could be called a perfect theologian who was lacking in the love of God. Chiefly valuable for expressing this conviction are those tracts which Gerson addressed to his sisters. As Schwab declares, « the practical direction of the mystical teaching of Gerson which opens up the road to the blessed secrets of the interior life not to theologians alone but to all, » are to be found therein (1).

Pourrat, for that matter, depends upon these tracts when he writes that Gerson would restrict the number of those called to the contemplative life (2). The texts that he cites, however, are unfortunate since in them Gerson is speaking of the contemplative life as a characteristic of some of the Orders to which all are not called (3). The whole trend of the tract in which this text is found bears out our assertion. What is more, the lectures which he delivered in the Halls of the University. and the sermons that he preached before clerics and lay people form, all of them, an exhortation to the same end. There is a simplicity in the mysticism of Gerson. He talks hardly at all of the external phenomena to which Dean Inge seems to say Catholic spirituality is given (4). All of his teaching seems calculated to open up for all an easy road by which they could travel to perfect sanctity. The ability inherent in all men to attain this favor if they co-operated with the graces advanced by God was as certain to him as the fact that they had life. « Do not tell me. » he cried, « that we cannot be as St. Peter and St. Paul ! Have we not the same nature as they ? (5) » In

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(1) Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 355.

(2) The tracts referred to by Pourrat are the *De monte contemplationis* and the *De exercitiis discretis devotorum simplicium*, III, 545-579, 605-618. Both of these tracts were written for the guidance of simple, devout people.

(3) Huyben (*La vie spirituelle*, tome VI, p. 303) refutes the thesis of Pourrat. Dom Cuthbert Butler in his *Western Mysticism* goes contrary to the statement of Pourrat as regards the spiritual teaching of St. Bernard.

(4) *Christian Mysticism*, p. 3, London, 1912.

(5) III, 1417 : « Anima nostra sicut anima eorum facta est ad Deum cognoscendum et amandum. Non ergo contemnamus nos, nec decipiamus, nec damnemus, nec scienter perdamus. Sed tales simus, ut connumerari possimus illis qui sunt amati a Deo. »

his teaching, as in his life and ideals, there was a great resemblance between Gerson and the mystics ot the North, and if, later on, the Brethren of the Common Life were to take to his writings and cultivate his spirit it was because of this similarity of ideal that made him so much their own (1).

His reaction to the false mysticism was, then, one of courageous discretion. When even the well disposed were wont to oppose mysticism in any form, because of the many errors that were masquerading under that name, he had the good sense to draw a line of distinction between the true and the false, and to try to attract not alone the scholars, but all good christians as well, to the true ideal of mysticism. What were the lessons that he inculcated and what the practical aids that he offered to help all to the realization of this ideal, are questions which we will try to answer in the succeeding Chapters.

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(1) Much of the dissemination of the manuscripts of Gerson in Germany must be attributed to the affection that the Brethren and the Congregation of Windesheim had for his works.

CHAPTER III

THE MOUNTAIN OF CONTEMPLATION

The history of devotion in the Middle Ages centers for the most part in the history of the Religious Orders. Each of the great founders, such as Benedict, Bernard, Dominic and Francis had in mind to reach out after the same ideal, but the means that he chose for its attainment were peculiarly his own. Thus the spiritual systems that characterized the great Orders differed one from the other as much, in fact, as did their mottoes. While in the period of which we write the ideals of the Franciscans and Dominicans predominated, the peace of the liturgical life of the Benedictines had not been forgotten. The simple piety of Bernard and his Cistercians still maintained all that. But in the Twelfth Century, with all the new learning, a new impetus had been given to speculative mysticism as against affective mysticism and a line of demarcation set down that is best realized in the spiritual systems of the Dominicans and the Franciscans. For, as their mottoes would suggest, the former were given to the quest for Truth, and the latter were pledged to exemplify in their lives the virtue of Charity. No pretense is made to establish an absolute division of ideal or to say that the spirituality of the Dominicans was exclusively speculative and that of the Franciscans exclusively affective. But these are tendencies that are manifest enough in the lives of the two Orders to warrant notice.

The mysticism of the followers of St. Dominic was well fitted to the intellectual strength of the Thirteenth Century. The restless search for learning was to find its prolongation in Mystical Theology, and Reason was to continue its groping to find its happiness as it approached nearer the Divine. It is in the Dominican School of the Rhine that this tendency became most noticeable, perhaps because they exaggerated the speculative aspect of mysticism (1). But even in the writ-

(1) Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 319 ; Hergenröther-Kirsch, *o. c.*, vol. III, pp. 74-76.

ings of St. Thomas the problem of whether the contemplative act was had solely by the intellect was posed and he for his part paid great heed to the function of Reason in the act of contemplation (1). The greatest happiness of man was to be found in the « contemplation of truth. This is the only activity of man that is proper to him (2). » The human spirit was to break the bonds that held it to earth and find its true happiness in coming to a knowledge of God. All things begin with Him. So then, all knowledge begins with Him and, though we do not find here the fulfillment of our desires, we do attain, in the contemplation of the Divinity, the beginning of the happiness that we hope for in the future life. The vision of God that we have here is therefore obscure. « We see in a dark manner. » But it is, none the less, in the meditation on the truths of Faith and in the search for a more immediate contact with the Divine Truths that contemplation is made to consist (3).

For the Franciscan School the point of departure was different. St. Francis himself, while he had great reverence for learning and told his sons to respect scholars as their superiors, was for a long time hesitant about the advisability of establishing the Order at the centers of learning (4). From that

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(1) *Summa theologica*, IIª IIæ, quaestio CLXXX, art. 1 : (Utrum vita contemplativa nihil habeat in affectu, sed totum in intellectu). « Et ideo vita contemplativa quantum ad ipsam essentiam actionis pertinet ad intellectum ; quantum autem ad quod movet ad exercendam talem operationem, pertinet ad voluntatem. »

(2) Id., *De ver.*, quaestio x, art. 2, ad 14 ; *Contra gentiles*, III, cap. 37 : « Ultima hominis felicitas est in contemplatione veritatis ». IIª IIæ, quaestio CLXXX, art. 3 : « Ex hoc ipso quod veritas est finis contemplationis habet rationem boni appetibilis et amabilis et delectantis et secundum hoc pertinet ad vim appetivam. »

(3) IIª IIæ, quaestio CLXXX, art. 5, ad 2 : (Utrum vita contemplativa secundum status hujus vitae possit pertingere ad visionem divinae essentiae) « Dicendum quod contemplatio humana secundum statum praesentis vitae non potest esse absque phantasmatibus... Sed tamen intellectualis cognitio non consistit in ipsis phantasmatibus ; sed in eis contemplatur puritatem intelligibilis veritatis. » Cfr Rousselot, *L'Intellectualisme de saint Thomas*, 2nd ed., pp. 196 ff. ; p. 223, Paris, 1924 ; Joret, *La contemplation mystique d'après saint Thomas d'Aquin*, p. 54, Bruges, 1923 : « Ici bas comme au ciel, imparfaite ou parfaite, la contemplation est formellement un acte d'intelligence. Non que la volonté n'y joue un grand rôle, mais l'intelligence est la faculté qui saisit la vérité. »

(4) Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 229.

fact alone we could conclude what would be the nature of the spiritual system that he adopted. The simplicity that could associate all created things in an act of adoration and the joy that sang the Canticle of the Sun suggest to us what was the chief characteristic of his devotion, — how nature became an avenue of approach to the Divinity and how he studied the revelation of God that was given mankind in the Person of Christ (1). There was in the devotion of St. Francis something of the sacramental principle which gives spiritual significance to a material sign. For instead of striving to mount directly to God by casting off all sympathy and all interest in the things of creation Francis took to the study of nature and of his fellowman his knowledge of the Love of God as revealed in the Life and Passion of the Redeemer and found all about him reason for joy. The heavens and earth bespoke the glory of God. Instead of seeking to fathom the nature of God he found new inspiration to be grateful to Him and the theme of his mysticism became the Love of God (2). It is a striking indication of the influence of the Franciscan School that many of the devotions that became popular in the late Middle Ages found their origin in the practice of Franciscan spirituality (3).

In the Fourteenth Century speculative and affective mysti-

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(1) *Ibid.*, pp. 252 ff.

(2) The attitude of Francis towards all creation was different from that of the Twelfth Century mystics who studied to find the thought of the Creator in the material creation. Francis embraced all with the term of brotherhood. Pourrat, *o. c.*, p. 256.

(3) E. Male, *L'Art religieux du* XIII^e^ *siècle en France*, 4th ed., pp. 123-160. Gerson himself calls attention to the twofold tendency of the mystical teaching of his day. Speaking of the mysticism of St. Bonaventure, he says : « ille enim singulariter inter omnes doctores catholicos, pace omnium salva, videtur idoneus et securissimus ad illuminandum intellectum, et ad inflammandum affectum. Cujus opuscula duo ut lecturam, et alias tractatus interim praeteream, tanta sunt arte compendii divinitus composita, ut supra ipsa nihil *Breviloquium* noto et *Itinerarium;* in quibus processum est duabus viis cognoscendi Deum. Primus namque horum duarum tractatum procedit a primo principio, quod Deus est, usque ad alias veritates sub Deo creditas et habitas. Alius e contra progreditur a creaturis ad Creatorem, per sex gradas scalares usque ad anagogicos excessus. » This latter method, though it be difficult, is, said Gerson, at the disposition of all. « Theologia talis mystica proprie est christianorum. »

cism may be said to have matched strength. Both systems had their partisans. Those who followed either method could say that it had made great Saints; those who opposed could allege that it had formed some who misinterpreted doctrine and had gone into false mysticism. But towards the end of the Fourteenth Century there was noticeable a decline in the adherence to speculative mysticism and, with the spread of the *Devotio Moderna*, came a period when the affective mysticism became more and more wide-spread (1). Gerson, as a scholastic, may be said to have been drawn at first to the former system. Amongst the sources that he consulted in his studies were the works of the Saint-Victors who, although they attempted a system that would given expression to the desires of the heart as well as to those of the intellect, formed a departure from the affective method of St. Bernard (2). But Gerson was more a follower of St. Bonaventure than of the Saint-Victors and though he was a scholastic he gradually cut himself from the scholastic tendencies and embraced the affective system (3).

This departure may be seen as early as 1397 when he wrote for his sisters the tract entitled : *The Mountain of Contemplation*. As has been above remarked, it was dangerous in his day to teach that all were called to the mystical state. So many and so varied were the abuses that masqueraded under the name of mysticism that scholars and Prelates were inclined to discountenance anything that would encourage extravagance in mysticism. There was growing up a conviction that it was dangerous to expose the theories of the spiritual life to any but an intellectual audience (4). But though he himself was a great enemy of heresy and though he suspected from the

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(1) Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 379. St. Bernard's mysticism was a sort of reaction against the exaggerated speculation of Abelard. The Saint-Victors tried to blend both in one system.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 153.

(3) It may be that because of his opposition to the speculative trend amongst the mystics of his time, he stressed the affective side more than he meant in reality to do. But the gist of his mysticism may be had in the phrase : the Love of God.

(4) III, 545 : « Mirari nonnulli fortasse poterunt ac quaerere proinde cur de materia tam sublimi puta de vita contemplativa, scripserim tractatum praesentem idiotis, simplicibusque,... cum ista materia ad illiteratos, simplicesque non pertineat. »

first all claims to mystical phenomena that were made by people outside as well as within the cloister (1), he was not like his colleagues tempted to discourage the mystical yearning that existed in the hearts of men (2). What he tried to do was to guide as well as stimulate it. He was against extreme asceticism in any form. The advices that he multiplied for his brothers in religion was that they be discreet in their penances, lest in trying to chastise and subdue the body they do harm to their health and become melancholic and sickly (3). Similarly, then, in his effort to encourage the mystical life amongst simple people who lived in the world, he was minded to counsel discretion and moderation, to make all advance dependent upon the obedience and the humility which made one choose a director and depend upon his advices (4). But he did encourage mysticism and mystical longings and claimed that a married man despite all the distractions that his family-life put upon him could none the less school himself in Christian perfection (5). More than that, he attacked the thesis that was commonly used, that it was pride to seek to attain to the contemplative life and taught that all are bound to tend towards Love since all are commanded to love God (6).

The sense of the supernatural was very keen in the people of the Middle Ages. We get faint suggestions, nowadays, of the spirit of those times when we become familiar with the thought and the manner of expression of the people in districts of Brittany, the Tyrol and the Rhine Vallies who have preserved much of the simple Faith of centuries ago. Spain,

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(1) I, 58 : « Debemus, meo quidem judicio, in omnibus, tamen praecipue in ista examinatione non praecipitare sententiam ; sed usque ad plenissimam examinationem suspensum tenere judicium. »

(2) IV, 337 : « Cognovimus aliquos quibus omnis doctrina miscens cum speculativa pictatem Fidei ad effectum reddebatur gravis, nausea onerosa ita ut doctores devotos diriderent ut idiotes et vetulas... quasi stare nequeant pariter devotio et eruditio. »

(3) III, 606 ; III, 743 ; cfr above p. 32.

(4) III, 616 : « Periculosissimum est, cum quis se dare vult ad devotionem et ad spiritualia exercitia, si non scit scripturas nec habet bonum directorem. »

(5) II, 676 : « Ulterius infero quod habens familiam, uxorem et liberos potest essentialiter perfici in vita spirituali et christiana. »

(6) III, 563.

too, and Ireland may show us in some of their forms of greeting how near the presence of God was and is to the people. Such was the force of religion that raised the majestic Cathedrals and wrote upon them in the vigorous language of imagery the theme upon which men meditated most, — the story of the Incarnation, the Redemption, the defeat of evil by the Death of Christ and the sufferings and trials of the Saints. The idea of the contrast of the active and the contemplative lives that finds expression in one of the details of the North Porch of the Cathedral of Chartres is one that was repeated often because it was part of the thought of the time. But though the two ways of life are separated and seemingly opposed in sculpture we must not think that the mind of the Middle Ages so conceived of them. A more exact expression may be had in the writings of Saint Bonaventure when he draws the distinction, — that has been generally followed since his day, — between the *Purgative Way*, the *Illuminative Way* and the *Way of Union* (1). Devotion, as well as Faith, centered about the belief that the Church and her members form the Mystical Body of Christ. Certain forms of expression, which the Art of the time took, suggest in a striking manner, to us at least, this theory of the Mystical Body. For when we see so frequently statues of the Virgin dating from this time which open up to display within them the whole history of the Passion, or when we see repeated over and over, in the paintings that followed soon after the century when the Faith was strongest, the theme of the Seven Sorrows of Mary the thought cannot but arise that these representations were born of a conviction of the solidarity that bound all to Christ and made the salvation of each individual soul a means for completing the work of the Passion.

Such was the concept of the spiritual life that Gerson preached to the people. This is the belief that explains his mystical teaching. When he declares that the life of the contemplative

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(1) This distinction into the three Ways of Perfection may be found in the writings of Pseudo-Denys. To St. Bonaventure is due the credit for reviving and explaining the theory of the Ways. They are not three separate routes but rather mark stages of advance in the spiritual life. Cfr Gerson, *Opera*, II, 672.

is of more worth to the Church than that of hundreds who lead and active life he means that all the members of the Mystical Body will profit by the prayer and the exaltation of the Saint, just as they suffer for the evil wrought by the sinner (1). Those then who take up with the active life and despise the spiritual do wrong. And for the same reason such as condemn their brethren who have to administer temporal goods do not act wisely (2). As long as we are in the way of life and make our pilgrimage to the heavenly city both spiritual and temporal are necessary. Each should be content with his position, whatever it may be, in the Mystical Body of Christ, and should strive to accomplish well the vocation that is given him (3). « He who does a good work for the honor of God and the good of his neighbor prays always, for though he does not pray actually himself, he profits by the prayers of others in the Mystical Body and that suffices (4). » We can see then why in his mystical teaching, Gerson would emphasize the function of love and why he should say that « those who think that the end of the contemplative life is solely to know or to acquire new truths deceive themselves, since the principal end is really to love God and to realize His Goodness » (5). It explains too why he could teach that all are called to perfection, that all have the capacity to imitate the lives of the great Saints inasmuch as all have received Baptism and all who enjoy the State of Grace participate in the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. So that where many of his colleagues were inclined to censure

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(1) II, 547 : « Nullus enim peccat quin noceat universis, tamquam si membrum corporis vel pars exercitus spiritualis depereat. » III, 562 : « Item contemplativi per devotas suas orationes omnibus aliis prosunt. » III, 563 : « Plus prodest toti Ecclesiae oratio devota unius contemplativi quam faciunt centum et centum vitam activam ducentes ad succurrendum aliorum necessitatibus corporalibus. » Cfr I, 113.

(2) III, 607.

(3) *Ibid.* : « Sit ergo quilibet contentus de situatione sua in corpore Christi mystico, etiam pro quocunque membro infimo reputetur, et studeat fideliter agere in ea vocatione qua Dominus eum vocavit. »

(4) III, 608 : « Licet enim non oret per se, orat tamen per alios in Christi corpore mystico et hoc sufficiat sibi. »

(5) III, 550 : « Ex quo ulterius patet illos decipi putantes vitae contemplativae finem esse solum scire, vel acquirere novas veritates, immo potius finis principalis ejus est Deum diligere et degustare quam bonus et suavis est. »

any effort to encourage mysticism amongst the uneducated, Gerson held that many an ignorant peasant could attain greater heights of Love than the cleverest of the scholars (1).

Even in his sermons, before the people as before the clergy, he preached that same lesson (2). As he said that the perfect Theologian was the one who applied his knowledge in his life, so the perfect Christian was the one who schooled his will in the Love of God (3). To anyone who faithfully prepared his soul for the coming of the Holy Spirit he promised that he would be filled with the cleansing flame of the Spirit. « Does any of you wish to be filled with the Holy Ghost ? You do, I believe. Then let him, after the example of the Saints mount to the Upper Room of his soul, and close the doors and windows of the senses. Let him sit quietly, persevering in prayer, and, with the prophet, think over all his years in the bitterness of his soul. In this wise he will pray with Mary who is called Mother of Salvation. Suddenly there will come from heaven the sound of the Divine Judgments, a sound that will cause fear and trembling and in the fear of God will be conceived the spirit of salvation (4). » « Everyone has in the chamber of his conscience three handmaidens which are : prayer, obedience and peace. Prayer is an invitation to the Holy Spirit. Obedience opens the door to receive Him. Peace holds Him fast (5). » In characteristic wise he set before the people a model of prayer to the Holy Ghost in which he words his petition thus : « O sweet and benign Spirit, our sure Refuge, Comforter of the afflicted, Father of the poor, Guardian of the orphan, Light of the blind, Guide to the wandering and Joy for the sorrowing, Thou our Friend Who does not turn away in time of need, hear the plaint that we make before Thee... Come Lord ! I know that by Thy joyful Advent and sweet visi-

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(1) III, 547.

(2) III, 1234-1247 : *Sermon on the Holy Ghost*, preached before alerics at the University ; III, 1261-1268 : *Sermon on the Holy Ghost*, preached to the people.

(3) I, 177 ; cfr above Chapter V, p. 81.

(4) III, 1239 : « Vult igitur aliquis repleri Spiritu sancto ? Vult, aestimo... etc. »

(5) III, 1262 : « Oratio Spiritum sanctum devote vocat. Obedientia aperte aperit. Pax jucunde retinet. »

tation my enemies will be dispersed like smoke. Pride that has desired to mount so high will fall. Anger will not tarry. Despoiling Lust cannot enter where Thou art... Build up Thy poor habitation with the seven pillars of Thy Seven Gifts, and protect it lest it be burned by the flames of passion and avarice, that my soul may abide ever with Thee in this world, through Grace, and in the world to come, in glory. » « Thus, O devout Christian people, should every devout soul invite the Holy Ghost into the habitation of his heart that He may live there always (1). »

This prayer to the Holy Ghost exemplifies the place which experimental knowledge had in the mysticism of Gerson (2). According to him the cycle of conversion is as follows : first, must come the inspiration of the Spirit, then, the application of the merits of Christ in the Sacraments, and third, humble submission to the guidance of a director. The importance which he attached to experience was suggested to Gerson doubtless by the reading of the writings of Richard of Saint-Victor who had constantly insisted that « any science not based upon experience has little or no worth » (3). As Schwab wells says : « The value of Gerson's mystical teaching stands or falls » on this, its prime characteristic. But though he stressed the importance of the personal element in the mystical life, he did not, no more than did St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross, forget to proffer safeguards that were necessary to protect souls from self-deception and wilfulness (4). As we have seen, his objection to the Beghards was that they neglected the heritage of the Sacraments and set themselves as their own guides. So that though he thought to encourage the mystical longings of simple souls he did not fail to remark that unless they had a capable guide in whom they confided and whose directions they followed, they would find it difficult to avoid falling into error (5). The many precautions that he set down for the dis-

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(1) III, 1262-1263.

(2) Schram, *Institutiones theologiae mysticae*, vol. I, p. 13, Augsburg, 1777 ; Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 419 ; Gerson *Opera*, III, 462.

(3) Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 373.

(4) IV, 342 ; Schram, *o. c.*, p. 13.

(5) III, 245.

tinction of true from false visions all exemplify the same tendency of seeking to check false mysticism, but that did not prevent him from lending encouragement to any who felt the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and from affording them his counsel.

Thus he composed for his sisters a work calculated to direct them to the threshhold of Union with God, beyond which, as he told them, he did not feel worthy to guide them (1). But that he should even attempt this was sure to bring upon him the censure of some who held that mysticism was only for the learned, or who were so taken with opposition to the extravagant mysticism that prevailed that they suspected all who gave sign of extraordinary devotion. Gerson believed, as he said later before the scholars, that as it was true that many amongst the clergy, and many who had great name for learning could be ignorant of the secrets of mysticism, so it was true that many of the simple faithful could receive them. He recalled how Denys besought his disciple Timothy to see that none who were inexperienced, — that is to say, who were puffed up with their Philosophy, who did not live good lives and who attacked what they knew nothing about, — should come to a knowledge of the truths of mysticism (2). « But simple people who have the Faith, can rise to Union with God. How ? By firm contrition and the mortification of the senses... So there is no reason why such people should not learn of Mystical Theology, which is Love and is procured by Love, whereas those who think themselves wise should be prevented from attaining it. (3) » Gerson had no qualms nor scruples in submitting for the ordinary people a series of lessons that would help them to perfect themselves in the Love of God. The teaching of the *Mountain of Contemplation* in its practical

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(1) III, 531-579 : *De monte contemplationis.* Cfr III, 579 : « Tertius vero modus habendi gratiam praesentiae Dei est per unionem, quemadmodum beatus Paulus Apostolus habuit, ceterique contemplativi excellentissimi. Sed de modo isto loqui me indignum reputo. »

(2) III, 426 ; III, 548. Cfr also, III, 546 : « Qua de re etiam accidit quosdam doctissimorum optasse quod utinam ad tantam scientiam non pervenissent, sed potius permansissent in sua simplicitate, quemadmodum matres eorum sine littera. »

(3) III, 548

aspects as well as in its principles deserves a little of our attention here.

The tract is made up of forty-five short chapters and contains a prologue wherein Gerson distinguishes two tendencies in the mystical life : the speculative and the affective, and declares that, while knowledge may lead some to the peak of Contemplation, humility is the virtue that is, above all, essential to the ascent (1). Before attempting an analysis of the teaching contained in the tract however, it may be well to recall the purpose he had in mind in writing it. Gerson's sisters were living at home a sort of religious life. They had aspired to the perfection that was the ideal of the contemplative Orders, and if they did not enter immediately into the religious state it was due, as we have already seen, to the suggestion of their brother that they remain together in the home, and to his promise to afford them the direction that they might need. To meet this promise, he supplied his sisters with several tracts that were summaries of the courses that he delivered at the University, or translations of works that had attained popularity in Latin and which he thought would be helpful (2). Most of these have been cited in other connections but we recall them here to give the tract of the *Mountain of Contemplation* its proper setting.

Returning now to the prologue we can appreciate the better why the Chancellor distinguished the active from the contemplative life and why, when he spoke of contemplation to his sisters, he had in mind the mode of life that religious proposed to lead in their convents. Allowance must be made for this fact. There are times when Gerson uses the word « contem-

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(1) III, 545 : « Impossibile est ad veram contemplationem alio itinere quam per humilitatem pervenire. Hinc est quod in contemplationis acquisitione pluribus scientificis viam ad eam perveniendi nil tantum includit quam quod se humiliare dedignantur, scilicet eorum intellectum occupando et submittendo mysteriis redemptionis Domini nostri. »

(2) In III, 572, Gerson declared that the *De stimulo amoris* deserved to be translated into French. A translation of this work is found in ms. nº 239 in the Library of Valenciennes, a manuscript which dates from the early part of the Fifteenth Century and contains the *De monte contemplationis* and the *De mendicitate spirituali* of Gerson. It is quite likely that he was the one to make the translation.

plative » as synonymous with the word religious (1). Because of this, some have been led to think that he had a very conservative idea as to who were fitted to become contemplatives (2). But the conditions that he held to be necessary for the mystical vocation were such that they could be fulfilled by anyone in the State of Grace, desirous to please God. Love, not Reason, opens the door to contemplation (3). Personal experience rather than book-learning is the basis on which mystical yearning must be founded, according to the Chancellor. He thus distinguished wisdom from science, and declared that many who were known as wise had really no title to the name unless their learning prompted love. The simple soul that accepts the truths of Faith and seeks to please God, has a far better chance of coming to a knowledge of God's Nature than has the scholar who, without a grain of affection, seeks to fathom the mysteries of the Divinity (4).

The Love of God is then the root and the fruit of the contemplative life (5). When for the sake of that love anyone gives

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(1) Thus, III, 556, he speaks of instances of undisciplined and untutored mysticism and says how he has not great faith in such, « non magnam fiduciam habeo in quosdam nostri temporis eremitas se dicentes magnum afferre profectum sibi ipsis, » whereas Religious Orders that are well organized train their novices in exercises of penance.

(2) Thus Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 409. Dom Huyben (*La vie spirituelle*, tome VI, p. 303) shows that the real significance of the passages referred to by Pourrat is that all have not the call to the *religious* life.

(3) III, 547-549. Zahn, *o. c.*, p. 298, indicates as characteristic of the mysticism of Gerson that he taught with Bonaventure that love enters into union with God without any activity of the intellect. But in his *Tractatus de elucidatione scholastica mysticae theologiae* Gerson declared that he differed from the stand of Bonaventure and Hugh of Balma on just that point. III, 423.

(4) III, 548, Gerson tells an anecdote to illustrate his meaning. « Imagine, » said he, « that a father had two sons, one of whom was fully devoted to the father and did all that he could to please him, seeking only to know what was expected of him; whereas the other made a point to pry into the affairs of his parent and tried to know all about him, yet displayed not the slightest affection. Which of these would be the more loved by the father and which the better rewarded? The former certainly who, indeed, because of his affection would be initiated into the thoughts of his father, while his more inquisitive brother would be left in darkness. » This is a repetition of the theme of the *De divinis nominibus*, VII, 3, of Pseudo-Denys, wherein he shows that knowledge of God is gained more through love than by searching.

(5) III, 549 : « Radix et initium vitae contemplativae debet esse Dei

up interest in worldly things and casts aside the cares and the preoccupations that keep him from the Love of God he may be called a contemplative. Those who enter religion with any other ideal deceive themselves. Those who think that the sole aim of the contemplative life is to gain new knowledge and to acquire truths before unknown mistake the whole purpose of the life, and such as these, though they be in the State of Perfection, can often be less perfect than a soul in the world that gives its love unstintedly to God (1).

What most conflicts with the Love of God, however, is worldliness. From the first, the soul that wants to advance in the way of contemplation must make the sacrifice of wordly affection. The Love of God cannot keep the same habitation with the love of the world (2). Worldliness must go. But how difficult it is to cut the ties that hold men's thoughts to earth ! Without the love of Christ the separation could hardly be made, but it is He Who draws souls to Himself and teaches them the art of true love (3). This call of Christ is manfested in various ways : sometimes, directly, when the soul feels an irresistible attraction for God and resolutely breaks with all that the world holds dear, sometimes indirectly, when the inspiration is gained by the reading of the lives of the saints, through the ministration and the example of other men or by the intercession of one's guardian angel (4). Gerson touches here on the doctrine of the Communion of Saints which had

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dilectio, hoc est, quod ejus amore dimittatur vita mundana, omnesque curae terrenae et occupationes, se totum tradendo ipsi Deo. »

(1) III, 550 : « Ulterius patet quod illos decipi putantes vitae contemplativae finem esse solum scire, vel acquirere novas veritates, immo potius finis principalis ejus est Deum diligere et degustare quam bonus et suavis sit ipse. » Cfr III, 462 : « Ipse amor Dei quaedam cognitio est, et qualis cognitio ? Certe experimentalis et suo modo proportionabilis tactui, gustui et olfactui in sensibilibus. »

(2) III, 551 : « Ex quo amor mundi talis est sicut praediximus, et quod amor bonus pervenire non valet ubi iste habitat oportet ergo inde expedire et ipsum totaliter rumpere, ejusque civitatem confundere atque ab hospitio suo expellere. »

(3) *Ibid.* : « Salvator noster attrahat ad se animam illam quam esse voluerit suam amicam et sponsam, instruendo eam in arte verae dilectionis. »

(4) III, 551-552.

so strong an influence upon his own devotional life (1). He appreciated fully the sympathy that bound the Church Triumphant to the Church Militant and in his meditations turned to contemplate the lives of the Saints and to gain inspiration from their example. For the lives of the Saints reflect in softer color the brightness of the Divine Love. Not alone that, but the merits of the Saints have great value to secure the devotion that is sought. In fact, Gerson went so far as to say that without the intercession of the Saints no one could succeed in attaining holiness (2).

We come now to the discussion of the means to advance up the Mountain of Contemplation. Those who desire to attain the height must be content to progress slowly and by stages. These steps according to Gerson are three : that of penance, — that of solitude and silence, — and that of perseverance (3). In a homely figure that he borrowed from Richard of Saint-Victor, he explained his division and the purpose of each stage of the route. Perfection, he said, is like a flame consuming wood. First, a dense smoke is given off, representing discontent with the past; then, smoke and fire intermingle, indicating a devotion that is not yet complete ; finally, nothing but the pure

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(1) In III, 602-605, tells how he practiced meditation. Each day of the week had its special devotion. Sundays he meditated on the Trinity. Monday was given to the thought of the benefits gained for mankind by the Angels. Tuesday he turned to the Patriarchs and Apostles, Wednesday to the Martyrs, Thursday to the Confessors, Friday was dedicated to the remembrance of the Passion, and Saturday to the Blessed Mother. On each day he prayed for the Gift of the Holy Spirit suggested by his meditation. Thus on Sunday for *Fear of the Lord*, on Monday, for *Piety*, Wednesday, for *Fortitude*, etc. This practice he recommended to his sisters : « charissime sorores si quotidie aliquid modo supradicto ex libris vestris, aut certe aliter addisceretis, sic exercitando vosipsas, multum sine dubio profectum in scientia, virtutibus atque in devotione acquirere possetis. »

(2) III, 553 : « Consequenter nisi nobis sanctorum angelorum adesset frequens auxilium, quis sufficeret evincere aut evadere fraudes laqueosque inimici ? Certe nullus. »

(3) III, 554 : « Necesse est scala uti, et sic ascendere principaliter tres in se gradus continente, quos nominare possumus poenitentiam humilem, locum secretum et silentium, et fortem perseverentiam. Inter istos autem gradus principales plures sunt medii, sed minus principales, per quos sit ascensus de alto in altum, et de virtute ad virtutem, quousque pervenitur ad montem contemplationis. »

flame of love remains (1). This division of the means of perfection into three ways is very like the distinction made by Saint Vincent Ferrier when he divided the stages into that of poverty, silence and purity of heart (2). It is really the traditional division of the spiritual life as suggested by Pseudo-Denys and clearly defined by St. Bonaventure.

Before the soul is ready for the mystical state, it must be schooled in self-restraint. To few it is given to make a sudden conversion from a worldly life to one of devotion, but, rather, most must prepare themselves by prayer and exercises of penance (3). Anyone who would strive to ascend immediately up the hill of prayer without first having proved his resolution and disciplined his will to a definite affection for heavenly above earthly things would assuredly deceive himself. The active life must precede the contemplative. In other words, none are fitted for contemplation until they have purged their thoughts of all worldly and carnal affections. For that very reason, some are entirely unfitted for the contemplative state since they never succeed in rising above their nature and dominating it (4). But though he thus distinguished the active from the contemplative live, Gerson never for a moment intended that they were mutually exclusive. « No one should form an impression that in the active life no room is left for the thought of God, no more than that in the contemplative life no concern is to be had for the work of purgation. (5) » The two must go together and assist each other just as Mary and Martha did.

The perfection of the contemplative life is had when the

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(1) *Ibid.* This comparison was to be used later on by John of the Cross in his tract on *The Dark Night of the Soul*, cfr Saudreau, *Le vie d'union à Dieu et les moyens d'y arriver d'après les grands maitres de la spiritualité*, 3rd ed., p. 154, Paris, 1921.

(2) Saudreau, *o. c.*, p. 231.

(3) III, 555 : « Qui enim ante poenitentiam talem, aut sine labore hujusmodi repente vellet uti perfecta vita contemplativa, hic seduceretur, et compararetur volenti uno saltu montem altum ascendere. »

(4) III, 556 : « Unde accidit aliquos talis existere complexionis, tam fortis et durae naturae ad vincendum domandumque cum labore tentationes suas quod inhabiles sunt ad perfectionem contemplationis ; sed oportet eos continue occupare laboribus vitae activae, et reperiuntur tales multi, tam clerici quam laici quos cognovi. »

(5) *Ibid.*

whole being responds to the call of love. At this point, Gerson makes a declaration of his inability to do more than to sum up the teachings of the mystics. He lays no insistence on the value of his own experience, but says that he is like a blind man talking about colors (1). A little exaggeration to be sure, for there is hardly any doubt possible as to the sincerity of his devotion and the persistence of his effort to advance in the spiritual way even at this early date (2). In order to show what must be the strength of the affection that the soul feels towards God, Gerson drew a picture of the manner in which one may be taken by a worldly and illicit love, how the whole being of a man responds to the thought of his beloved, how he loses human-respect, becomes deaf to advices and even to the threats of future judgment. Waking or sleeping he has no other concern. Nothing then may serve to keep him from his love, but rather his resolution is such that it will over-ride all obstacles (3). But just as worldly love may cause the forgetfulness of all things, even including forgetfulness of God, so must the Love of God possess the soul. For one to be so taken with the Love of God that he will be indifferent to the censures and the persecutions that his fellow-men rouse against him, for one to be so taken with the thought of God that all else would grow pale and insipid, — that is to have the devotion of a true contemplative (4). Anyone having such a love may be said to be dead to the world, because the world has no charm over him. Such a one has his senses closed to all that the

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(1) *Ibid.* : « Propter ergo istam causam dicturus sum conditiones quasdam vitae contemplativae, vere non sufficienter, nec quasi istas bene noverim ; sed de talibus loquor, sicut caecus de coloribus, recitando quae sancti in suis tradiderunt scripturis, et hoc modicum quod sentire potui per longum tempus, et experientiam et diligentiam, et cum Dei auxilio. »

(2) Cfr II, 709 ; III, 220 ; III, 426 ; I, 131, passages where Gerson speaks of his early efforts to grow in piety.

(3) III, 557.

(4) *Ibid.* : « Sicut mundanus amor facit oblivisci Deum, et quod esset ita fortis et ardens, sicque radicatus in corde ejus, quod non posset nec sciret voluntarie, et sua sponte, seu libere alibi cogitare, nec timeret contemptum, seu non curaret vituperia, aut increpationes persecutionum nec etiam de morte metuit propter istum amorem, Dei scilicet, etc., etc. Tunc dico quod iste esset perfectus Dei amor, ad quem tendere debet aliquis per vitam contemplativam. »

world holds dear and open to the joys of the Saints. Since the purpose of the contemplative life is to develop that love, Gerson turns to the second part of his teaching, to show how, in solitude and silence, the soul is led to acquire the singleness of purpose that is essential to the ascent.

« Once a devout person has become skilled in the practices of the active life and has brought the body into subjection to the spirit there ensues a period of languor (1). » This period is what St. John of the Cross describes as the passive night of the senses (2). The soul has no desire for the pleasures and comforts of the world, yet the spiritual consolations that are wished for are absent. Here is the real test of the disillusionment with creatures. Many there are who cannot conquer it, but who after a time of struggle lapse into their former way of life with the reflection that they ought not try to be different from their fellow-men. The charm of the world is still greater, because more sensible, than the attraction to God (3). But with strong resolution, with the eye fixed on the future reward that awaits persevering effort the soul can surmount this trial.

After this duel between the love of the world and the Love of God, languor commences to vanish. The soul no longer stands at the cross-roads. The choice has been made and the journey begun, but there are not yet to be expected bright vistas of comfort. The soul has now to be disillusioned with self (4). This stage of the journey is called by Gerson a stage of solitude and silence. It is not enough that the soul break with the world but it must also drive all worldly affection from the heart. It is not enough to go out to the desert away from contact with other men if the mind if full of the interests

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(1) III, 558 : « Postquam persona devota in vita activa usitata fuerit, et corpus suum per poenitentiam humilem in servitutem spiritus redegerit, ad minus saltem in maxima parte, si non ex toto, ac amor mundanus eidam displicuerit, talis persona tunc erit tamquam languida. »

(2) Pourrat, o. c., vol. III, pp. 297 ff. Mysticism, according to Gerson, must begin and end in darkness. III, 420-421.

(3) III, 558 : « Et quod plus molestat, ipse amor mundi oculis cernitur corporis, et sentitur dulcis esse ad retinendum amarus vere ad perdendum ; amor autem Dei e contra non videntur, et sentitur durus ad acquirendum et dulcis ad dimittendum. »

(4) III, 559.

THE MOUNTAIN OF CONTEMPLATION

Miniature in ms. fr. 990. (Bibl. Nat.)

and the heart torn with the passions of society. Although such a soul may be in a material solitude it has within it all the sources of distraction that keep souls from the society of God and the Saints (1). To attain this, it is indeed well to seek out quiet and secrecy, each according to his own nature. Every one must find for himself the sort of seclusion that is most helpful to meditation. Similarly, let each take whatever bodily posture that he finds helpful to him.

At this point Gerson introduces a few objections that were urged against those who sought to become contemplatives. It was said that the life was essentially selfish, that it was pride to seek to advance beyond the limits that others found difficult to attain, and that those who tried to practice the contemplative life soon became melancholy and queer (2). These were, perhaps, difficulties that had been placed in the way of his sisters when they thought to adopt a life of prayer. To treat of these difficulties Gerson makes a brief digression. Against the first objection he declared that while the active life sufficed for most people, it did not nearly please God as much as the contemplative life. He left no doubt of his disapproving what selfish element there might be in the desire to attain to contemplation, as when people having duties and trusts neglected them in the effort to train themselves in contemplation (3). Such as they did wrong, said Gerson, but for those who had no obligations to others the case was different. These were really a blessing to any community. Not alone did they exercise a ministry by the force of their example, but their prayers were advantageous to all (4). They are the

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(1) *Ibid.* : « Accidit enim quod aliquis saepe corpore solus sit ab hominibus segregatus, nihilominus tamen per phantasias, cogitationes et melancholias patitur, et suffert gravissimum et onerosam societatem in semetipso. »

(2) III, 562 : « Propter tria motiva,... quidam mirantur quod aliquis se tradit vitae contemplativae. Prima, quia contemplativi nonnisi sibiipsis proficiunt. Secunda, quia videtur eis quod contemplativi nimis velint inquirere et sapere atque nimis alte volare. Tertia est, cum multi sint decepti exinde, et effecti fatui et melancholici. »

(3) *Ibid.* : « Si enim hujusmodi pro tunc se tradere vellent contemplationi, ipsi se damnarent propter obligationem qua ligati sunt ad aliis proficiendum. »

(4) *Ibid.* : « Item contemplativi per devotas suas practiones omnibus

eyes of the Mystical Body, and if they seem not to be active like the hands or the feet it must not be objected that they are of no use to any but themselves. They are the ones who direct all to God. Their prayer avails a hundred times more than that of the other members of the Mystical Body (1). So that anyone not bound by obedience to do otherwise would do well in answering the attraction of the Spirit and embracing the contemplative life (2).

Far from being a stimulus to pride, the contemplative life is a safeguard against it (3). Far from being under the spell of melancholy, the contemplative lives in quiet and peace of conscience (4). Worldlings may esteem his manner of life as foolish and cheerless because he is not interested in the things that worldlings prize. But of the spiritual wealth and the great consolations which those who break with the world enjoy none but themselves may tell (5). It is certain, said Gerson, that the chief actions of a rational being are those of the intellect and the will in meditating and loving. These are acts which belong to the contemplative state in which, much more than in the active life, men may be said to reach their true perfection (6). The solitude and silence where-

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aliis prosunt. Et accidit saepius quod propter eorum merita Deus faciet,... quoddam maximum bonum, puta pacem alicujus regni : quia nihil possumus sine gratia Dei speciali quam citius boni contemplativi impetrent a Deo quam activi. »

(1) III, 563 : « Plus prodest toti Ecclesiae oratio devota unius contemplativi quam faciunt centum et centum vitam activam ducentes. »

(2) *Ibid.*

(3) This applied especially to scholars and religious, those who studied Theology particularly, for they were in danger of becoming too engrossed in the theoretic side of their work. He does not deny that contemplatives may be subject to pride.

(4) III, 564.

(5) *Ibid.* : « Non vident (mundani) magnas consolationes et sancta opera, spiritualesque divitias quas adipiscuntur contemplativi, mundum refutando. »

(6) *Ibid.* : « Ex quo Deus ipse simplex est et unus, inquiri vult in cordis simplicitate et unitate. Cor autem tale simplex non est et unum, quod in tot partes divisum est per curas mundiales malas et vanas. » This purification is operated only by the assistance of God's Grace, which is granted to all who dispose themselves for it. « Donum autem istud gratiae veraciter tribuitur solis inquirentibus ipsum diligenter atque ardenter, et ad hoc se disponentibus. »

in the soul becomes « simple and one » and thus like God is the work of meditation. Christ does not come to those who have a tumult of worldliness within them. But His Grace is assured to those who dispose themselves to receive Him. Through meditation the soul becomes disillusioned with self. Meditation is the means by which, humanly speaking, the soul attains the height of contemplation, and by meditating the soul maintains itself in the third stage, which is that of perseverance.

At this point, Gerson indicates, in very picturesque detail, many failings which hamper the progress of souls up the Mountain of Contemplation. It was in an attempt to portray these failings that the miniature that accompanies this Chapter was made. The faults that are described are : want of effort, unwillingness to break with the world, too great preoccupation with distractions and temptations, too great self-confidence and pride of achievement (1). All these failings are depicted by the artist in the miniature quite as Gerson described them in the tract. We see some who carry, on their backs, a load of worldliness, others are harassed by the barking of dogs, by which are represented the temptations of the devil, still others wander from the route because they will not consult Faith or Hope who stand, the one at the beginning, and the other midway up the mountain, to direct those who make the ascent. At the top of the mountain, Charity directs the thoughts of the true contemplative towards God, while the soul that is filled with pride is cast down. Many other sage directions did Gerson afford to his sisters in this tract of the Mountain of Contemplation. They were not to be extreme in their penances; they were not to read too much but to meditate well on what they read ; they should accept trial willingly ; they were to trust in the guidance of others ; they should be constant in their striving to attain the peak of contemplation (2).

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(1) III, 568-569.

(2) III, 570 : « Sunt qui asinum suum, hoc est corpus proprium, nimis vexant ita quod anima se de eo juvare non valet. Quidam sunt qui ascendendo vehementem patientur aliquando verbi Dei famem spiritualem cupiuntque post haec illud audire et legere; unde accidit quod

These sage directions were followed by a discussion of the many ways by which meditation may serve to lead souls to the contemplative life. Gerson did not propose to give in detail a system of meditation, but he discussed features of the systems used by some of the great mystics. Because he was directing his tract to uneducated people he did not attempt to explain the method of Richard of Saint-Victor which, he said, was directed rather to scholars than to simple people (1). He remarks that all the Doctors agreed that it was necessary to meditate on the last things, but he was, he said, looking for a more precise method than that (2). The method of Spiritual Marriage to be found in the sermons of St. Bernard on the *Canticles*, and also in the tract entitled *Eternal Wisdom*, was not without its dangers especially for novices. For when they thought to be pledging their troth in spiritual marriage to the Lord, their thoughts could easily descend to the level of the flesh (3).

Since meditation, humanly speaking, is the most important asset in the progress up the mountain of Contemplation, Gerson spends a little time to outline systems that may be found helpful. It is striking that he recognizes the worth of each and that he leaves his readers to make the choice that they may find most in accord with their nature. They may, like Saint Bernard, meditate on the Life of Christ, or like the author of the *De stimulo amoris* devote themselves to the remembrance

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legendo nimis seipsos detinent. Rursus reperiuntur alii... qui fugiunt nimis tribulationem. Quidam non adhuc sufficienter instructi de itinere quaerendo et interrogando a scientibus, ad habendum desuper concilium. Alii, inconstantes. Alii non bene seipsos intendunt seu respiciunt ad periculo itineris. »

(1) III, 571 : « Modum, meo videre, magis appropriatum profundis clericis quam simplicibus. »

(2) III, 572 : « Concorditer omnes doctores communiter in modo, scilicet isto, qui est meditare inferni poenas horridas, paradisi gaudia, sua peccata atque mundi vanitatem ; sed ego adhuc particulariorem modum inquiro. »

(3) III, 572 : « Verum quidem modus talis est altus et subtilis satisque periculosus, sic loquendo, praesertim a principio suae conversionis, eum tenere volentibus. Ratio : cum enim tales novitii aestimarent de spirituali connubio, leviter laberentur in recordatione de spirituali ad carnalem matrimonium. »

of the Passion (1). Two other systems, — which, however, had their drawbacks, — were those of seeking inspiration from the lives of the Saints or of meditating during Divine Service (2). It was hardly possible, Gerson claimed, for ordinary people to secure the books that they need to rouse their devotion if they used the former method, or to collect their thoughts while singing was going on in the Church. He suggested, as being helpful and easily adaptable, the method of meditation that he had learned from a pious old woman and which he practiced himself. He was minded he said to write out a model of how one should apply this method (3). The fulfillment of this resolution we see in the *De mendicitate spirituali*, wherein the soul, in the role of a beggar, appears before Christ and the Saints to ask aid and their alms (4). Behind this devotion was the thought of Death and Judgment. It was towards these realities that all Gerson's spiritual development tended. There was much more than an accident in the change of name from John Charlier to John Gerson. It was not simply because he came from a town so called that Gerson took the name, but the word Gerson in Hebrew means « exile » or « pilgrim » and suggested to him constantly the pilgrimage that he was making from earth to a heavenly home (5). In this thought Gerson turned repeatedly to his brethren the Saints, who had accomplished their journey to implore them to direct and assist him. Here, in like manner, he counsels his sisters to think often of their last end and to prepare beforehand the friendships and the devotion to the

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(1) III, 572 : « Concludo beatum Bernardum suam contemplationem et ascensum in eadem incoepisse, meditando assidue Domini Nostri vitam,... Doctor quidam, in libro suo *De stimulo amoris* intitulato, istam materiam similiter tractat et specialiter de Passione, ostendens quod in ea omne bonum reperitur, et quod eadem Passio sit viae hujus, puta contemplationis ostium. »

(2) *Ibid.* : « Quidam... se ad quendam librum devotionis se tradunt, vitam alicujus sancti. Alii vero faciendo sua servitia divina in Ecclesia addiscunt et se exercitant contemplari nitentes. »

(3) III, 574

(4) This practice, so Gerson said (III, 574) had the sanction of William of Auvergne, called William of Paris († 1249), in his *De Rhetorica divina*. Cfr William of Auvergne, *Opera*, tome I, pp. 336-406, Paris, 1674.

(5) III, 767 : « Gerson origo fuit advena voce sonans »; III, 865-766 : *Testamentum peregrini*; I, 129 ff.

Saints and the Blessed Mother that will save them in the time of their Judgment (1).

A few further reflections of a practical nature completes the tract. Gerson discusses briefly certain failings that prevent progress being made in the spiritual life. Like all the directions that he had previously offered, the final remarks bring out the affective qualities of his mysticism and show how great a part he assigned to the will over the intellect. It was a quality to which he was drawn more or less naturally by the force of the Philosophy that he had learned in his early days in the Schools, but that he adhered to the mysticism of the Franciscans and more particularly to that of St. Bonaventure finds its explanation more from the fact that he was concerned with training simple souls and uneducated people to the practice of the spiritual life. Here he assures his readers that the real spirituality is that which awaits patiently the good time of the Master, neither seeking too much sensible emotion (2), nor being too easily discouraged by periods of dryness. « Those who do what they can, and persist in their determination to serve God often have greater merit in their prayer than others who have not to combat difficulties and temptation (3). » Spiritual consolations were not to be sought after, but were to be received gratefully from the Hand of God. « If it pleases Him that we go without them for a time let us accept gladly as He disposes, praying only that he may keep us in His Will (4). » Similarly with the extraordinary gifts, Gerson recalls the teaching of Augustine and the experience of St. Paul. But said he, « one must not be too eager about these things. In heaven we will come to the knowledge of God; here on earth let it suffice us to know the truths that the Holy Catholic Church teaches and not strive to sound the Nature of God (5). »

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(1) III, 575.

(2) III, 576 : « Sed hujusmodi comparantur huic qui frigore nimium cruciatur, recusat tamen accedere ad ignem nisi prius habeat calorem. »

(3) *Ibid.* : « Si nitantur quantum in se est, atque faciunt suum laborem,... tales pro tunc majus habent meritum quam saepe si eis advenerit subito, sine tali conflictu. »

(4) III, 577 : « Illud unum simpliciter oro ut mihi non irascaris, sed ut vivam in tua gratia tantummodo, de ceteris fiat voluntas tua. »

(5) III. 578 : « Sufficit vobis agnoscere Deum in Paradiso coeli...

It is quite natural to find such precautions set down in Gerson. Knowing as we do the anxiety that he felt over the extreme manifestations which mystical longing took in the instances of the Beghards and the Brethren of the Free Spirit, he was mindful to forewarn those whom he directed of the dangers that lurked for people who sought to stride too far ahead. He did not dispute that the relevations of God could supply for the want of learning of some mystics. In the face of the many relevations that were prevalent and which were the cause of evil more than of good in that they unsettled the minds of the people, he was careful to guarantee that while they would be disposed to co-operate with whatever Grace that was given them, his sisters would be enabled to keep themselves secure from ambitious imaginings and the spirit of prophecy on the one hand, and from too great eagerness to scrutinize the Nature and the Will of God on the other. The characteristic of the mystical teaching of the Mountain of Contemplation is its deep humility. This is particularly noticeable in the last few lines, wherein Gerson declines to speak of the manner in which the Soul receives the Grace of union with God, because of his own unworthiness to speak on so eminent a subject.

Quotiescumque de contemplatione et meditatione de Deo factis, scitis qualis sit res quam videtis, videturque vobis quod res haec visa quocumque modo assimiletur alicui rei alteri hujus mundi, tunc certitudinaliter teneatis vos non videre Deum taliter per claram visionem. »

CHAPTER IV

MYSTICISM IN THE SCHOOLS

The situation at the University of Paris at the time that Gerson began his teaching has already been described (1). The demoralizing influence of some of the Pedagogics, the vain pretensions of the students, the deterioration of the intellectual ideal and the ambitious designs entertained for positions of honor and rich sources of income were fruits of a struggle that had gone on for well over a century, and made imperative the reform in the educational system that Gerson advocated.

But the cure that was to be sought to correct the mentality of the scholars must have been more radical than a change of system. An evil that had taken so long to grow and entrench itself was not to be rooted out by legislation. A change had to be effected in the minds of the students; their outlook and their ideals had to be corrected; a stimulus had to be given to prompt a less selfish attitude. Forgotten, for the time, had been the promise of the Scriptures : « If you know these things, you shall be blessed if you do them. » Under the stress of the controversy between Aristotelian, Augustinian and Averroist thought Philosophy and piety had been suffered to drift apart (2). When Scotist stood against Thomist, and Oxford was pitted against Paris, many forgot, in the heat of the struggle, the universal character of truth and the wholesome value of charity. Partisanship had had a hand in the process conducted by the Bishop of Paris, in 1277, when several doctrines of the Thomists were condemned (3). The same manipulation may be detected in the opposition to the memory of

(1) Part One, Chapter V, pp. 77 ff.
(2) Gilson, *o. c.*, pp. 225-226.
(3) De Wulf, *o. c.*, Vol. II, p. 35.

Eckhart (1). After the clash of 1387 brought the warring elements together and the rejection of the theses of John of Montesono led to the exile of the Dominicans from the University time was given for sober judgments to weigh the results of the controversy and to take means to point out a road to harmony (2).

Though the Dominicans were absent from the University, the spirit of Thomism was not quenched. Adherents of the system were to be found, notably, amongst the Carmelites, and in the Faculties of some of the Colleges (3). But the outstanding powers, for the time, were the Scotists, or *Formalizantes*, and the Nominalists, or *Terministi* (4). Between these two, however, there could be no peace and, with the habit well ingrained from decades of indulgence, the learned Doctors of the University from Buridan to Peter of Candia and John of Ripa gave their attention and their effort to a destructive criticism of their adversaries more than to the erection of a body of truth that would be reflected in good and noble living (5). The result was that there developed amongst the students a thirst for criticism and a disrespect for all that came under the head of « ancient ». A lack of poise that hesitated between the ambitions of science and the teachings of religion made them see difficulties to the Faith where none existed. Reason blundered along, never certain that it was not being deceived

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(1) Cfr the thesis of O. Karrer, cited above Part Two, Chapter II, p. 234. De Wulf, *o. c.*, Vol. II, p. 156, says of the situation : « Les querelles passionnées des terministes, des scotistes et des thomistes troublent l'économie des théories fondamentales. En théologie comme en philosophie, elles introduisent dans la discussion un élément imaginitif, factice et même irrationnel. On a l'impression qu'en certains cas on discute pour discuter. »

(2) This Gerson attempted to do in his *Letters on the Reform of Theology*. Cfr above, Part One, Chapter V, pp. 79-80.

(3) De Wulf, *o. c.*, Vol. II, pp. 197-203.

(4) Ehrle, *Die Sentenzenkommentar Peters von Candia*, pp. 74 ff. Gerson himself however gives the best portrait of the quarrel : « Quidam contentiosi dum logicos culpant, vocantes eos qui secum non sentiunt terministas, ipsi longe grandiorem terminorum congeriem multiplicare compelluntur. » I, 101.

(5) I, 99 : « Signum curiositatis... credulitatem impedientis apud scholasticos est gaudere potius in impugnatione Doctorum aut in defensione unius pertinaci quam ad eorum dicta concordanda operam dare. » De Wulf, *o. c.*, Vol. II, pp. 180-185. Ehrle, *o. c.*, pp. 76 ff.

by some evil genius. The idea that science and Faith were opposed took hold more and more upon the imaginations of the young and made them less conscious of the claims religion had upon them (1). All this devolved from the chaos into which the false freedom and subjectivism of the Nominalists had thrust the Schoolmen.

« He that has his reason well ordered is well directed towards God », said St. Thomas. What wonder, then, if, amidst all the turmoil of the Schism and the disorderly impatience of the scholars, men seemed to falter a moment in their progress towards the divine !

To cope with the attitude of the « learned » at the University and to free the students from the spell of their example would not be easy. It required great tact. The absoluteness of the professors had become a fact accepted even outside the limits of the Universities, where such as Schoonhoven could protest against the monopoly claimed by the scholars (2). They were the judges. But it was not fitting that anyone should pretend to judge them. Gerson himself declared what reception would greet any correction that might come from him, if it were too baldly made (3). They would laugh him down with the charge of « old-fashionedness » (4). And the students who admired the talent and the courage that they presumed it took to construct and defend a Philosophy all one's own, — as many of the professors tended to do, — would make a mockery of any attempt to teach them practical truths, or to repeat doctrines that they thought antiquated (5).

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(1) I, 111 : « Sic adolescentiae frena laxatur, sic eunt in adinventionibus suis,... Fiunt exinde contumeliosi, vagi, petulantes,... irreligiosi praeterea, nihil amplius a paganis de Christiana Religione perdocti. »

(2) I, 77 : « Non videntur mihi recte sapere qui nolunt quod aliquis de divinis scientiis disserat, nisi fuerit physicis et naturalibus scientiis praeditis et imbutis. » Thus Schoonhoven, against the mentality of the Schools.

(3) I, 111. Cited above, p. 78, note 2.

(4) The Occamists prided themselves on representing the *via moderna*. To the Nominalist, Thomist as well as Scotist was in the *via antiqua*. As we have seen, the ideal of the Nominalists or Terminists was to reject all of the past and build up entirely on their own resources. Any attempt then to bring into honor the systems of Thomas, Hales or Bonaventure would be greeted by them quite as Gerson declared. Cfr IV, p. 337 ; De Wulf, o. c., Vol. II, pp. 154, 174.

(5) I, 111 ; I, 99, 102.

The manner in which Gerson met the situation was masterful and is, perhaps, his best claim to notice as a pedagogue. Amongst the first courses that he delivered were the lectures on the Gospel of St. Mark (1). By the way of exegesis he planned to introduce his notions on the ideal life of students and priests ; by pointing the contrast between the mentality of the Schools and the example of the Gospels he thought to bring about a recall from the egoism that was practiced to the sacrifice that the Gospel entailed. That he had already determined the direction that his reforms were to take, we cannot doubt, although he does not openly proclaim his project. There are noticeable a few pointed innuendoes against the mentality of the Schools. There is a patent effort to delineate in attractive color the charm of the truly Christian life for those whose whole ideal was centered in the quest of knowledge. Even from the beginning of this course which was to develop into the lectures on Mystical Theology, Gerson threw out a hint of what he meant to do. « With God's help, I hope, » he said, « to treat of the question of Contemplation, not in the form of lectures, but by way of simple talks for those who are interested in the matter » (2). No one could quarrel with that programme, innocent as it was. Yet it was the beginning of the real reform that he advocated in the University, — the reform that was to go deeply into the lives of all who accepted it.

Whether or not this series of private talks was given in the early years of his professorship, it is not easy to say (3). But

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(1) IV, 203-228 : These Lectures were composed of the following tracts : *Tract on the Distinction of True from False Visions*, I, 43-59 ; *Tract on Temperance in Food and Dress of Prelates*, II, 634-644 ; *Sermon on the Desire of a Bishopric*, II, 563-570 ; *Tract on the Fast of the Carthusians*, II, 715-730 ; Schwab lists also : I, 1-7 : *Propositions on the Literal Sense of the Scriptures*. Cfr Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 263, note 2.

(2) IV, 213 : « Spero enim, Deo propitio, me super hac materia contemplationis certe pulcherrima et subtilissima quaedam posterius locuturum, atque non tam ex nostra quam ex aliorum sententia, neque tam magistrali locutione quam collocutione familiari, non demum polito curiosoque sermone, sed quotidiano loquendi more, et extra lectiones ordinarias inter audire volentes proposui disserere. »

(3) In all probability the many writings that he sent to his sisters in the years 1397-1401 were the substance as well as the fruit of these private talks that he gave to the students. Cfr Part One, Chapter II,

it is clear enough that Gerson set about to counteract the effects of false Philosophy, and that he set upon Mystical Theology as the fulcrum whereon to base his effort. Even the titles of the lectures that he delivered bear out what we say. In the years 1395-1397 which may be called the period of his apprenticeship, he lectured on the *Spiritual Life of the Soul*, on *Impulses*, on the *Desire of the Bishopric*, on the *Manner of Life of the Carthusians* and On the *Distinction between True and False Visions* (1). His action made quite a sensation and several, such as d'Ailly and the brother of Gerson, wrote to ask for copies of the lectures (2). The period of exile in Bruges stopped for a time the development of his ideas, but we have seen how the students were wont to consult him and how he lent them direction from afar (3). We have seen how, from 1397 until 1401, he was busy writing directions to his sisters and copying and adapting for those who asked it the matter of the courses already given. But, while away, his resolution became fixed, and when he returned to Paris he had clearly determined to attack openly the vain learning of the University. Thus, the *Lectures against Vain Curiosity* had in view not alone to expose the faults in the method of teaching, but also to lead up to the lessons on Mystical Theology (4). « This is the purpose of these lectures : (to show that) a clear and appreciative knowledge of the Gospel truths is to be attained more through

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pp. 25-26. Thus the *Mountain of Contemplation*, changed somewhat to meet the conditions at the University, would be the fulfillment of the hope Gerson expresses here.

(1) The practical direction of all may be seen to point to the reform of the ideals of the students. The manner of inculcating the lessons was indirect. Gerson rarely attacked the students for their mode of life but he painted a grim caricature of their ambition and the end to which it would bring them.

(2) The *De vita spirituali animae* was written out at the request of d'Ailly who honored the lectures with his presence ; the tracts, *De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis*, and the *De non esu carnium Carthusiensium* were sent to Nicholas, the brother of Gerson. Cfr III, 1, 43 and IV, 723.

(3) Cfr *Letters to Students of the College of Navarre*, I, 106-113.

(4) It is characteristic of Gerson that he was never satisfied with a negative criticism. These *Lectures on Vain Curiosity* were in the nature of a challenge. Having criticised the system in vogue, he was under the necessity of indicating a better one.

a spirit of penance than through human research alone (1). » Gerson patently leveled his arrows against the « intellectuals » of the University. His appeal was made, it is true, to his students alone but the answer to his invitation was so great that the series of talks on *Mystical Theology both Speculative and Practical* were given in public conference before members of the Faculties as well as of the student body (2). To them all then he set out to demonstrate that penance and love count more than all the intellectual gymnastics in the world (3).

The method that he followed in his treatment of the speculative part of mysticism was distinctly the Scholastic method with emphasis given to definition and division (4). But as he advanced in the exposition of his subject the gaunt frame of scholastic argument became animated and throbbed with the life and the interest that he felt. He spent not a great deal of time with argumentation, though he did halt once or twice to conciliate when he dealt with topics that would bear different interpretations according to the School to which various members of his auditory gave adherence. The *Formalizantes* were the ones against whom he most frequently tilted, although he declares that their opinions had not nearly the following that Nominalism had (5). This does not mean, as some have thought, that he was, as a dyed-in-the-wool Occamist, in bold contrast to everything that was of the School of the Realists (6). Actually he was standing at the crossroads.

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(1) I, 106 : « Intelligentia clara et sapida quae creduntur ex evangelio, quae vocantur theologia mystica, conquirenda est per poenitentiam magis quam per solam humanam investigationem. »

(2) The form of address that Gerson used in his *Lectures on Vain Curiosity* was : « *Viri Patres et Fratres.* » This is hardly the salutation one would use with students.

(3) The prologue to the *Lectures on Mystical Theology* indicates the interest that was taken in Gerson's project. « Astrinxit me promissio novissima illud aggredi, quod vestram expectationem repetere nunc sentio ; ostendere scilicet : an cognitio Dei magis per poenitentem affectum quam per intellectum investigantem habeatur. »

(4) The chief types of lectures delivered at the University have already been instanced, Part One, Chapter V, p. 82, note 4.

(5) I, 101 : « Vereor ne curiositatem increpans, in eamdem me demergam, dum studes eos quos Scotistas appellamus ad concordiam cum aliis Doctoribus adducere, quorum certe numerus longe major est, et multitudine, et auctoritate. »

(6) In III, 370, Gerson, speaking of the faculties of the soul, declares

Still adhering to the Nominalism that was his early heritage, he was lending a sympathetic ear to the counter-arguments of the Realists ; he was acquainting himself with the *Summa* of Thomas, and with the teachings of Bonaventure and of Hales, with the view to combine the advantages of the conflicting systems (1). It was at this very moment that he was agitating against the evils wrought by the attitude of the scholars and that he was attempting to cry down the self-sufficiency that would cut away from the whole heritage of the past. But we have seen sufficiently well, in the Chapter on the *Reform in Education*, the direction that this ideal followed. When we come to the consideration of the mystical teaching of the Chancellor we find that it is well based on the writings and the thoughts of members of the Realist School.

« Mystical Theology rests », Gerson told his hearers, « on the data of the experiences of devout souls. » (2) Those who have not been favored with such graces may find it difficult to understand, and certainly it is hard to explain to such, just as much as it is hard to give a blind person an idea of color, or to instruct the deaf in the principles of music. But Mystical Theology, based on personal experience, is a perfect science, — a true Philosophy which makes sages out of the simplest of people (3). But lest his audience, who, for the greater part, had

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that they are distinct only nominally and not actually. He digresses to argue against the opinions of the Scotists. Schwab sees in this indication of a Nominalist protest against the Realist viewpoint, *o. c.*, p. 332-333.

(1) The reference cited, and also two other passages occurring in the same tract III, 376, 382 show how familiar Gerson was with the theories of opposing Doctors and, different from d'Ailly, prove him to be not unsympathetic to Thomism. The many times that he refers in a commendatory manner to the system of Thomas harmonizes ill with the extremes of Occamism with which he is charged. Consult I, 104 : « Forte controversiam totam solveremus distinctione facta de analogia hujus nominis ens, quae tam late a sancto Thoma, supra quartam metaphysicae in principio ponitur. » Cfr I, 4, 17, 201, 108 ; II, 661, 669-681, 712 ; III, 56, 12, 368, 426 ; IV, 226.

(2) III, 365 : « Theologia mystica innititur ad sui doctrinam experentiis habitis ad intra, in cordibus animarum devotarum. »

(3) III, 366 : « Experimentum quippe quale erit ab extrinseco certum, si illud, quod in intrinseco sit, non certissimum ab anima experiente judicetur ? Ex quibus elicio pulchrum corollarium, quod si philosophia

not only not been blessed with mystical experience but were tempted to scout at those who so much as tried to give evidence of it, find reason to withdraw their sympathy and attention, he hastens to assure them that they should try for the favor, and that the first great qualification to be possessed by them must be strong Faith (1). Whoever cannot believe in order to understand, according to the word of St. Augustine, is not an apt student of Mystical Theology. Upon what basis were they to believe ? On the evidence given by not one or two, but thousands of souls who had experienced the mystical states. When many concur independently in the same testimony it is not reasonable to doubt them. The more learned of those whom Gerson took as his guides were : Augustine, Hugh of Saint-Victor, St. Thomas, Bonaventure and William of Auvergne (2). For those who followed the lectures and took to heart the lessons that he was to inculcate he assured many benefits but particularly that their own devotion would be kindled anew, their preaching would take on more vitality and their dealings with the people would be much more human and affectionate (3). They would be able to distinguish true mysticism from false and not be minded to classify the devotion of pious souls with the errors of the Beghards and the Turlupini.

« To acquire a knowledge of Mystical Theology one should appreciate the nature of the soul and its powers (4). »

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dicatur scientia omnis procedens ex experientiis, mystica theologia vere erit philosophia, eruditique in ea, quomodolibet aliunde idiotae sint, philosophi recta ratione nominantur. »

(1) III, 367 : « Quia nemo scit quae sunt spiritus nisi spiritus qui in ipso est, propterea discoli sunt et nequaquam mysticae theologiae idonei auditores, qui nolunt credere ut tandem intelligant. »

(2) III, 369 : « Peritiores autem sunt quos utraque instructi reddiit ornatos ; una intellectus et affectus altera quales fuerunt Augustinus, Hugo, sanctus Thomas, Bonaventura, Guillielmus Parisiensis, et ceterorum pauci. »

(3) III, 369 : « Quis autem appropinquaverit igni et vestimenta ejus non ardeant ? Rursus alius fructus est pro illis, quos praedicatio sumpta ab hujusmodi doctrina potest accendere ad amorem Dei jam praeconceptum, remanente autem frigescente pectoris ejus qui loquitur. Denique compertum est multi habere devotionem, sed non secundum scientiam, quales procul dubio pronissimi sunt ad errores, etiam supra indevotos si non regulaverint affectus suos ad normam legis Christi. »

(4) *Ibid.*

We see here a great difference between the method of the *Mountain of Contemplation* which was addressed to people of no great intelligence and the scholastic touch that enters the lectures on mysticism at the University. There was to be, for the time being, no question of playing on the emotions of the scholars. They had to be shown every step of the way. Then if they were as logical as they claimed to be they would submit to the evidence made known to them. This evidence was to come from a study of themselves and was to prove that without devotion all learning is vain (1).

Gerson set deeply the foundation for the mystical teaching he was to begin. He invited all the scholars to scrutinize their own nature in the hope that they would like St. Augustine, realize that they had been made for God and that their hearts would have no rest until they rested in Him. Following the example of the Victorines he proceeded to divide the faculties of the soul into the affective and the speculative (2). Each of these, in turn, he subdivided : the speculative into the three avenues of knowledge, which are sense perception, reason and pure intelligence ; the affective into sensible appetite, will or rational appetite, and the highest part of the affective faculty called *synderesis*. With the lower faculties, Gerson is hardly concerned in the development of his thesis. But since his distinction of the affective from the speculative, and of *synderesis* from pure intelligence form integral parts of his system, it will be well to appreciate the grounds upon which he bases the distinction.

The simple intelligence is that faculty by which the soul aided by a light communicated by God realizes the existence and the truth of first principles ; *synderesis* is a natural inclination which the soul feels towards the good once the

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(1) IV, 338 : « Vana prorsus, inutilis et noxia habenti si non comes affuerit devotio quae prius est et humilis affectio. »

(2) III, 370 : « Sic utamur in proposito quasi vires animae essent penitus in natura distinctae, dividentes primo animam rationalem in intelligentiam simplicem, secundo in rationem, tertio in sensualitatem,... et quoad affectivas proportionabiliter. Primo, in synderesim seu mentis apicem. Secundo, in voluntatem vel appetitum rationalem. Tertio, in appetitum animalem. »

simple intelligence makes it known (1). The former is an intuition ; the latter is an instinctive movement. Just as simple intelligence cannot refuse to accept a truth once it has taken cognizance of the meaning of the terms which express it, so neither can the highest power of the affections deny respect to the first principles of moral once they have been made known by the intelligence. Contemplation, then, rests in the simple intelligence. Mystical Theology is the act of the *synderesis* (2). These faculties are like lamps that have the twofold duty of spreading light and heat. For as there is no knowledge to which the note of feeling is not added, so there is no feeling that does not carry along with it a degree of knowledge. Neither faculty reaches perfection without the assistance of the other. Another metaphor which Gerson used to express the activity of the two faculties represents them as mirrors which the more luminous they are, the more they become adapted for Mystical Theology. Just as material mirrors that are not kept clean reflect poorly, so these spiritual mirrors once they have been turned to the creature and away from the Creator become soiled. The purification is a work of Mystical Theology, and it is accomplished solely by penance and Faith in the Gospel (3).

Presuming then that it was necessary for all his hearers to begin the work of purification, Gerson outlined how the intellectual faculties must work to the attainment of contemplation, which is the perfection of the intellect. It is interesting to note the direction that he afforded. The activities of the intellect he divided into thought, meditation and contemplation. Each of these is represented by a particular kind of motion (4).

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(1) III, 371, 373.

(2) III, 383 : « Non fallitur qui dicit contemplationem sine dilectione nomen contemplationis non mereri ; sed nos unum ab altero secernimus ut pretiosior habeatur inquisitio veritatis. »

(3) III, 374-377 : « Constat quod speculum quodlibet quanto erit purius in se, et luminosius ab extrinseco, tanto erit aptius ad operationem suam. »

(4) Pseudo-Denys was the first to use this graphic method of illustrating the character of the contemplative act in distinction to thought and meditation both. Saint Thomas follows closely upon his distinction, IIa IIae, quaestio CLXXX, arts 3-6. A. GARDEIL, O. P. *La structure de*

Thought comes naturally to the mind, but, if unguided, it is often without fruit. Gerson represents it by a crooked line ambling from side to side. Meditation is the conscious effort to seek out and appreciate truth and is made with difficulty but not without benefit. It is represented by a straight line. Contemplation does not reason ; it beholds. It does not require effort, but is free and at the same time simple ; it is made without effort and with great fruit. The figure that represents the contemplative act is the circle. According as one rises above the demands of the senses and schools himself in the act of meditating he is the more suited for contemplation. Meditation, if it be well done, passes into contemplation (1).

There are, accordingly, three classes of men : those whose lives are no wise different from animals in that they bend to to every demand of the senses, — those whose lives are guided by reason, — those whose ideals go beyond the present order of things (2). Three degrees of affection correspond to these three stages of perfection. In the first, man is ruled by desire ; in the second, by devotion, sorrow and prayer ; in the third, by charity, — charity, not in the commonly accepted sense of the word, but a charity that produces peace, because it lifts souls into union with the divine. This last stage is what constitutes Mystical Theology, which thus becomes more the fruit of penitential affection than of intellectual investigation (3). It

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l'âme et l'expérience mystique, vol. II, pp. 343 ff, Paris, 1927, gives the teaching of Denys and comments according to the mind of St. Thomas.

(1) III, 378 : « Cogitatio est providus animae obtuitus, circa sensibilia ad evagationem pronus. Meditatio est providus animae in veritatis cognitione seu inquisitione vehementer occupatus. Contemplatio est perspicax et liber, id est expeditus animae contuitus in res spirituales perspiciendas usquequaque diffusus et in divina specula suspensus. Cogitatio igitur vagatur et serpit sine labore et fructu. Meditatio nititur et intendit cum labore et fructu. Contemplatio circumvolat et circumfertur sine labore et cum fructu. » These distinctions, Gerson culled from the writings of the Victorines.

(2) III, 382.

(3) III, 383 : « Tribus praenominatis cognoscendi modis qui sunt cogitatio, meditatio, contemplatio, tres affectionis maneries correspondent, quae sunt cupido vel libido, secundo devotio vel contritio, seu compunctio aut oratio, tertio, dilectio, non quaecumque sed extatica seu anagogica id est sursum ducens et rapiens in divina. » « Haec est mystica theologia quam quaerimus, quae ad anagogicas et supermentales

is more perfect than Speculative Theology for the same reason that love is more perfect than knowledge and charity more perfect than Faith (1).

So, then, Mystical Theology becomes the act of the soul which unites with God through loving desire, or again it is the experimental knowledge had of God by the union of love. For that reason it is true wisdom (2). The soul that is following this way is often lifted into a new sphere. There occurs a phenomenon that might be illustrated by what is familiar to those who mark the manner of action of purely sensible affections, — how in the presence of the object loved they can hardly contain themselves but seek to go out of themselves to embrace the more fully the thing desired. Similarly with the soul illumined by the contemplation of heavenly things : while it may rest calm and keep in perfect self-possession, there are times when it is stirred with a love that cannot contain itself but leaps in a transport of joy (3).

There are, then, many differences between Speculative Theology which proceeds by reason, and Mystical Theology which is gained by love. The former is acquired in the school of the intellect and is thus called Scholastic, the latter is studied in the school of the affections, by the exercise of the moral virtues (4). No great learning is required in those who attend

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excessus deducit, quam aliquando nomine charitatis, aliquando charitativi amoris lego nomine appelatam. »

(1) III, 383 : « Cognitio Dei quae est per mysticam theologiam melius acquiritur per poenitentem affectum quam per investigatem intellectum. Ipsa quoque, ceteris paribus, eligibilior est et perfectior quam theologia symbolica, vel propria de qua est contemplatio, sicut dilectio perfectior est cognitione, et voluntas intellectu et Charitas Fide. »

(2) III, 384 : « Theologia mystica est extensio animi in Deum per amoris desiderium. Aliter sic : Theologia mystica est motio anagogica, hoc est sursum ductiva in Deum per amorem fervidum et purum. Aliter sic : Theologia mystica est experimentalis cognitio habita de Deo per amoris unitivi complexum. Aliter sic : Theologia mystica est sapientia, id est sapida notitia habita de Deo dum Ei supremus apex affectivae rationalis per amorem conjungitur et unitur. »

(3) III, 385.

(4) *Ibid.* : « Supersunt aliae inter has theologias speculativam et mysticam differentiae sumptae ex acquisitionis earum varietate. Una quidem est quia speculativa theologia rationibus utitur conformiter ad physicas disciplinas. Ideo scholasticam eam, vel literatoriam quidam

the school of love. Once the soul knows that God is, and that He is All-Loving and All-Desirable, there is nothing to prevent it, provided that it be purified and sufficiently well-disposed, from directing itself to Him in the fulness of its love (1). Thus it is that Mystical Theology, which gives the most perfect knowledge, may be possessed by any of the faithful, even to the most ignorant. Speculative Theology is never perfect without it is accompanied by Mystical Theology, but to be a true mystic no deep knowledge of the speculative side of Theology need be had (2).

Here Gerson arrived at the high point of his argument. Having made clear the basis for the choice that he would have all the students make, his method changed and he began to summon reasons to persuade them to seek to train themselves more in the school of the affections than in that of the intellect. He points out, in apt figure, many striking differences between the two Theologies and stresses out the superiority of Mystical Theology. Those who are wise in their own estimation, who are taken with a love of vain discussion, and who savor not of the things of God are often denied what is permitted to simpler people who have true Faith (3). Another difference is that the learning that is acquired from books may be an occasion of sin whereas that which is had through love becomes an aid to virtue. « Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. » Not that learning of itself be evil, but the abuse of

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appelant ; quamvis non sufficiant istae scholasticae exercitationes nisi quis studio vehementi nitatur habere conceptus proprios et intimos eorum quae tradita sunt a summis Doctoribus... Mystica theologia sicut non versatur in tali cognitione literatoria, sic non habet necessariam talem scholam quae schola intellectus dici potest, sed acquiritur per scholam affectus et per exercitium vehemens moralium virtutum. »

(1) III, 286.

(2) *Ibid.* : « Ex praemissis concludimus cum beato Bernarde, *Ad fratres Carthusienses de Monte Dei*, quod theologia speculativa nunquam in aliquo perfecta est, sine mystica, sed bene e contra. »

(3) III, 386 : « Sicut multis qui clerici, vel literati aut sapientes, vel philosophi, aut theologi nominantur occultandus est sermo de mystica theologia, sic plurimis illiteratis et simplicibus (fidelibus tamen) tradi potest. » Gerson recalls how Pseudo-Denys tried to keep knowledge of the mystical way from « qui tumentes jam philosophia, maleque viventes, conculcant pedibus suis sordibus quidquid non sapient, quidquid etiam non intelligunt canino dente lacerant. »

knowledge is so much more wicked in the lives of the perverse who turn learning to the defense of their evil-doing. Thus some use their learning for the pursuit of honor and wealth, others use it to mount to the precarious heights of authority, still others turn their learning to even less worthy ends (1). Of such as these the Scriptures say : « They are wise in doing evil, but to do good they have no knowledge (2). » There could be no doubt in the minds of his hearers as to what he was attacking. They were familiar with the theme, since Gerson had been storming along the same front for well over a year.

One other striking distinction was made to carry conviction to the hearers that they should not be content with speculative knowledge alone. Gerson reverted to the theme which found expression in the tract on the *Mountain of Contemplation*, and which is illustrated in the miniature that accompanies the forgoing Chapter.

« By Mystical Theology we live in God and are enabled to cross the turbulent sea of sensual desires to the shore of eternity (3). Knowledge does not suffice to attain that haven. » There are pilots who make a great show of learning, but who do not follow the dictates of their better judgment and so lose themselves and their ship. These, obviously, are meant to indicate such students or professors who do not live according to the truths that they teach. But it is not science but affection that makes men realize that it is good to cling to God. Thus did Gerson bring to a climax his lesson to the students. Hitherto they had put all their confidence in learning. Henceforth they should hope to attain the fulness of life through love.

There are three qualities to love : it ravishes, it unites the

(1) III, 387 : « Ecce enim finis multiplex, falsa seductione, quaeritur a multis, qui quoniam aversi sunt a Deo fine vero ut in varia dispergantur opportet. Huic finis est divitae et opes ; illi sordidae voluptates ; huic pompatici honores ; apud alium potentatus fragilis et anxius. »

(2) *Ibid.*

(3) III, 388 : « Per theologiam mysticam sumus in Deum, hoc est, in Eo stabilimur et a mari turbido sensualium desideriorum ad litus solidum aeternitatis adducimur. In hac consideratione differentia etiam inter duas theologias edocetur. Speculativa quippe, si sola est, numquam quietat, inquietat potius, etc. »

lover and the one loved, and it satisfies (1). Rapture occurs when a faculty is so elevated above the inferior faculties and so concentrated in its object that the other faculties cease to act. Ecstacy is a more perfect kind of rapture and takes place in the highest part of the soul (2). But love not only causes rapture : it unites. By perfect conformity of will with the Will of God the soul becomes one with Him. This loving union of the soul with God is accomplished by Mystical Theology, and is properly styled by Pseudo-Denys and the Fathers transformation (3). Gerson signaled the errors which took their rise from this idea and recalled how some had gone to the extreme of saying that the soul that united itself with the Divinity became one with God, so that the individual personality was lost. It was no longer question of a creature knowing and loving its Creator, but God Who beholds and loves Himself (4). Gerson recalled that he had condemned this teaching in the writing of Ruysbroeck (5). Others held that the Love of God was nothing other than the Holy Spirit offering to the Father through the faculty of human reason the love with which the members of the Holy Trinity hold Each Other. This was the teaching of Peter the Lombard, but it had been contradicted by Thomas of Aquin and others of the Doctors (6).

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(1) III, 390.

(2) III, 391 : « Porro extasim dicimus speciem quamdam raptus, qui sit appropriatius in superiore parte animae rationalis quae spiritus, vel mens, vel intelligentia nominatur ; dum mens ita in suo actu suspensa est quod potentiae inferiores cessant ab actibus suis, sic quod nec ratio, nec imaginatio, nec sensus exteriores, immo quandoque nec potentiae naturales nutritivae, et augmentativae, et motivae possint exire in suas proprias operationes. »

(3) III, 394 : « Amorosa unio mentis cum Deo, quae sit per theologiam mysticam, congrua transformatio nominatur, sicut beatus Dionysius et sancti patres locuti sunt. »

(4) III, 394 : « Dicunt ergo quod talis anima (dum perfecte amore fertur in Deum) perdit se et esse suum, et accipit vere esse divinum, sic quod jam non est creatura, nec per creaturam videt aut amat Deum, sed est ipse Deus Qui videtur et amatur. »

(5) *Ibid.*

(6) III, 394 : « Haec opinio imponitur magistro Sententiarum, quam ideo Doctores non tentant quia non posuit formam aliquam dilectionis actualis, vel habitualis, quasi mediam ad diligendum Deum esse necessariam. » Cfr Joret, *o. c.*, p. 12, and Gardeil, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 342. Gerson indicates several examples that were used to illustrate the manner

Love, according to Gerson, is like heat that unites those elements that are suited to each other and separates those which are opposed. Thus, under the glow of love all that earthly and animal in man becomes separated from all that is divine and heavenly. From this arises a division between the spiritual and the corporal, between the precious and the vile, so that the soul, purified and cleansed, unites with God and becomes like to Him. Through such a loving union, in which Mystical Theology may be said to consist, is gained peace, contentment and stability. The soul, having attained its perfection in God, rests in Him (1).

The fruit of this union is prayer (2). All the properties which have been ascribed to Mystical Theology may also be applied to prayer. Mystical Theology has been called the experimental knowledge which one has of God. But prayer is exactly the same. It is the elevation of the mind and heart to God through pious and humble love. This love is what the Fathers of the Desert spoke of when they said that perfect prayer did not consist in the sound of words nor in the fine phrasing that cover selfish desires, but in the piety and simplicity that does not reason over the things that they demand. Mystical Theology and perfect prayer have then this in common that they both reside in the affective faculty (3). Both of them presuppose love for God towards whom their attention is directed and both generate love. « We must pray always, and not fail, » said the Lord. Gerson comments on this to the effect that

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in which the soul is united with God. Thus, some liken the union to the transformation that occurs when a drop of water is let fall into a wine cask, others cite the welding of two pieces of metal, others instance the union of matter and form. These and other explanations Gerson discarded as being too suggestive of pantheism.

(1) III, 395 : « Amor sicut calor habet naturam congregandi, seu uniendi homogenea, sicut etiam separat et dividit heterogenea... Omne igitur quod in homine reperitur spirituale, vel divinum, segregatur quodammodo per amorem vivificum ab omni eo quod terrestre est et corporeum. » « Per praedictam amorosam unionem, in qua mysticam theologiam consistere videtur, anima quietatur, satiatur et stabilitur. »

(2) III, 397 : « Quid enim est aliud oratio perfecta quam experimentalis et affectualis cognitionis notitia ? »

(3) *Ibid.* : « Mystica theologia et oratio perfecta in hoc conveniunt quod utraque ponitur in vi affectus superiore, et quod utraque est respectu primi et summi boni. »

« whosoever in a spirit of devout and humble affection desires to turn his eyes always to the Lord and make his every action a prayer may do so (1). » With this word of encouragement he finishes his lecture on the speculative aspect of Mystical Theology and turns to the practical side.

To know of what Mystical Theology consists and what are the faculties upon which it acts should not suffice for Christians, least of all for ecclesiastics. From this time on Gerson set as his objective to work for the union of piety and Philosophy. All of his lectures tended to effect the one aim. In his sermons and other writings we come across many aphorisms of his that indicate that he was following all the time and in all that he did the same plan, — to bring about a spiritual regeneration in the Schools (2). He condemned the folly of those who thought to know all, who dispensed with the guidance of others. Over and over he reverted to his theme that love more than knowledge was the way to approach God. The tracts that we have dating from this period prove the thoroughness of his dedication to the reform of education, and show that Mystical Theology was the avenue by which he trusted to attain his reform (3). Every lecture marked a stage in the road. All pointed the same way. One has but to instance the subjects on which he lectured to prove that. There is the

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(1) III, 398 : « Semper autem orat, semper oculos ad Deum habet qui semper pio humilique affectu desiderat. »

(2) In I, 81, in the course of his response to the letter of Schoonhoven, Gerson mentions the tracts on *Speculative and Practical Mysticism* and recalls what his intention in composing the tracts was. « Habens hanc intentionem deducere ad notitiam familiarem et propriam scholasticorum ea quae devoti homines de ea magis affectiva declaratione et figurativa locutione quam litteratoria proprietate tradiderunt. » III, 425, also refers back to the ideal that he had at the time these two tracts were composed. « Studuimus in duobus opusculis de mystica theologia pridem compositis, per multas considerationes et industrias ista determinare velut ad communem intelligentiam, et Philosophiam deducentes hanc sapientiam non quod secludere vellemus divinos et supernaturales influxos. Absit haec Pelagiana temeritas. Sed consoni loqui voluimus Philosophis et Scholasticis Theologis talia quae non abhorrerent a suis traditionibus et scholis ; et si effectum est qualiscumque ex parte, judicium sit legentium et gloria Deo ; si vero nequaquam, ignosce tu Deus, et tui. »

(3) IV, 54 : « Studium nostram fuit concordare theologiam hanc mysticam cum nostra scholastica. »

Tract on Prayer. There is the one on the *Good and Bad Signs* by which to test one's spiritual progress. He spoke also on *Meditation*, on the *Passions of the Soul* and on the *Canticle of the Heart* (1). But the lectures that best sum up his teaching are those which extended over a period of years and which he compiled under the title : *De mystica theologica practica* (2). This tract was written at Genoa, in 1407, from notes of lectures which had been given previously at the University (3). The matter of the tract consists of various aids, or *industria*, by which one could hope to advance in mystical contemplation. Human effort had, of course, to be made, but it by no means sufficed to make a man a mystic. The call and the inspiration comes from Christ. But that effort must be made, one has but to recall the words of St. Paul : « We are the co-adjutors of God (4). »

The aids or *industries* that Gerson points out are twelve in number. First, one must await the call of God. All men are called to salvation but not all are suited for contemplation. For that reason, no one should try to guide his own efforts, but should consult a skillful director. All men may be divided into three classes : those who look to God as Judge and have fear of Him, — secondly, those who, like mercenaries, are faithful in the hope of receiving a reward, — thirdly, those whose service

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(1) These tracts were written at appoximately the following dates : 1406, the tracts on *Prayer*, on *Good and Bad Signs*, on *Meditation* ; 1413, the tracts on the *Canticle of the Heart*.

(2) An English translation of this tract was made in 1884 by H. Austin under the title : *Practical Guide to the Spiritual Life*.

(3) It will be remembered that he had gone to Avignon and Rome in that year as a member of the committee that tried to bring both Popes to resign their claims. While awaiting the meeting of the two Pontiffs which had been agreed upon, Gerson spent his time writing the *De theologia mystica practice conscripta*. Cfr III, 399 : « Has igitur industrias novissime studui redigere ad formam quamdam tractatuli, dum post laboriosam legationem (utinam fructiosiorem) super negotio pacis ecclesiae regredi tandem datum esset a Roma ad Genoam, ubi praestolabamur conventionem juratam et concordatam Marsiliae, per duos contendentes debere complere in Saona, illic pendente nostra, qua frustrati tandem sumus expectatione. »

(4) *Ibid.* : « Ceterum quod humana non sufficit industria posterius elucidabitur, quod tamen non sit prorsus abjiciendo docet Apostolus vocans nos Dei coadjutores. »

is inspired by love (1). The first are beginners : the second, those who advance : the third, those who have attained perfection. In the work of spiritual progress self-knowledge is a great asset (2). The temperament of each individual must be considered. According to St. Gregory, excitable natures had no facility for contemplation. But that did not constitute an obstacle why such as they should not strive for the gift. Simply, the effort that they would have to give would be long and painful. There enters here into the mystical teaching of Gerson a wholesome view of the self-scrutiny that must accompany all tendency to attain perfection. There is nothing puny or meticulous about the examination that he would have each person make. His counsel was too fundamental to be an occasion for scruples. All that thought to embrace the spiritual life were advised to consider their characters and see by what means they were more quickly and effectively drawn to God, whether it be through chagrin for past offenses, by the thought of the sufferings of Christ, or by the force of reasoning. Gerson shows these tendencies to be fully reflected in the spiritual lives of the Saints, for whereas Jerome and Ambrose seem to have stressed hatred of sin the most, Augustine and Thomas accentuate the force of reason and Gregory and Bernard the power of love (3).

Another consideration which Gerson held out for his hearers was that they realize the obligation that their state of life put upon them. There was no question of the lay-vocation or of those whose concern had to be first and foremost to provide for themselves and others in the active life. Gerson never hesitated to say that such as they must attend first to the

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(1) III, 402 : « Sunt alii rariores, qui animo neque servili, neque mercenario et plusquam filiali rapiuntur in Deum velut obliti suae servitutis, suae mercedis, suae paternalis auctoritatis, sociantur Ei velut amicus ad Amicum, immo suaviori familiaritate conjunguntur Ei, sicut sponsus ad sponsam. »

(2) III, 403.

(3) III, 403 : « Ceterum quis nesciat quosdam ex hominibus plus vigere in irascibili virtute, quosdam in rationali, alios in concupiscibili. Quo-circa videmus, alios citius venire ad compunctionis, et consequenter ad contemplationis gratiam, ex considerationeque detestationeque vilitatis suorum flagitiorum et hoc per vim irascibilem ad honesta, etc. »

duties of their state. Nor was he concerned here so much with Prelates who were indeed obliged to minister to the wants of others, but who were at the same time counseled to strive after perfection (1). His auditors were chiefly ecclesiastics and religious and to them particularly he applied his advice. Their state and their duty was to tend to perfection (2). It was for that reason that they entered upon the life, in order, as he says, « that they might become, as it were, eyes to the Mystical Body directing it towards God » (3). What folly then for such to say : « I am satisfied with the ordinary life and trust to save my soul quite as the ordinary individual does his » (4). Not to wish to be perfect was itself an imperfection. Besides, such as these had no choice. If they did not accept the gifts which the heavenly Father offered them, they offended Him. If they did not make proper use of the talents that were given them they did wrong (5). Those who were called to the contemplative life should not then think lightly of the invitation and spurn the gift.

The following considerations aimed to instruct the well-disposed as to the means they should take to respond to the grace of the mystical vocation. The first suggestion made was that they keep themselves free from too great preoccupations. Especially was this to be as regarded intellectual ambitions (6). « It often happens that where knowledge is less there love abounds the more. Love often has access to places that are forbidden to learning (7). » All study then, and all action should be directed towards the one end. It should form added reason for the love of God. Similarly with the gift of contem-

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(1) III, 404.

(2) *Ibid.* : « Est porro status officiumque ecclesiasticorum praesertim religiosorum tendere ad perfectionem hanc inquirendam ; quoniam in schola devotionis et orationes ad hoc traditi sunt. »

(3) *Ibid.* : « ut sint velut oculi, cetera membra corporis Christi dirigentes tam ad seipsa quam ad Deum. »

(4) III, 405 : « Vox multorum est : sufficit mihi vita communis... Nolo merita apostolorum, nolo volare per summa ; incedere per planiora contentus sum. Sed viderint hi quod jam imperfectio est nolle esse perfectum. »

(5) *Ibid.*

(6) III, 406-407.

(7) *Ibid.* : « Saepe enim ubi minus cognitionis ibi plus affectum. »

plation. It must not be sought after for selfish reasons. Men should not desire it simply as a guarantee to fame (1). Such motives are unworthy of the gift that is sought. But all who seek to respond to the invitation of God must be minded to await His Good-will. For reasons of His own He often denies to souls dear to Him the realization of this gift. So, then, whoever attends the favor must seek it from on high, in a spirit of humility to use it thankfully if it is given, and to accept the denial of the grace with equanimity (2). No one should look down on those to whom the gift was not imparted, but all should remember the Charity in which the Kingdom of Heaven consists.

Akin to this last recommendation is the one which follows: he who prepares to live according to the counsels must be persevering in his effort. All advance depends upon the Will of God. Yet no one must think that he is, because of that, freed from the obligation of preparing himself (3). If, in order to attain prestige in the Arts and the Sciences, it be necessary that one work diligently not counting the hours nor the labor that he puts into his study, how much more for the greatest of all Arts ? If men are eager to build up fortune and honors, and spare themselves no fatigue once they feel that their desired end in within reach, how much more those who strive for the greatest of treasures ? « Be constant therefore ! » cried Gerson. « If the flame of devotion is slow to kindle, persist in feeding it with spiritual reading, meditation and prayer, until the glow of contemplation comes (4). » « But if, after long striving, one's effort is still unrewarded, there is only to regret one's own coldness and misfortune. For the effort made is never lost

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(1) III, 407 : « Noli, precor, ad otium contemplationis anhelare tamquam cogniturus aut aliis ostensaturus tantummodo sublimitatem ejus, qualem ex veracissimis sanctorum attestationibus fide quadam accepisti ; et non potius ut vilior et abjectior sis in oculis tuis. »

(2) III, 409 : « Quisquis es igitur qui ad contemplationem traditus es, satage impiger ad eam sed ita ut illam expectes ab alto, etc. »

(3) III, 410.

(4) III, 411 : « Quousque rursus algido robore torpescit anima tua ! Quamdiu non exardescet ignis devotionis in ea ? Insuffla, exsuffla ne cessaveris, legendo, meditando et orando donec scintilla contemplationis vel tenuis evolitet. »

with Him Who considers both the good-will and the trials of the giver (1). »

Since Mystical Theology has its seat in the affective faculty of the soul and is called the science of love, Gerson thought it well to point out the relation of mystical love to the other passions, to bear out the lesson that the growth of the evil passions must be watched lest they choke the source of the affections. For if the heart is attached to evil affections it cannot elevate itself to the love of God. But if all the affections are to grow and prosper then must the garden of love be kept pure (2).

Other practices which he goes on the suggest are the fruits of his practical genius, and his power of adaptability. For, though he set out to proffer directions to guide all to the mystical life, he did not propose to mark out every step of the way, and though he wished to train the students of the University in exercises that would help them develop their spirituality he made no claim to put his system above the personality of those who accepted it. The proof of his good sense is found in this, that he left great room for individual response, and did not try to bind all down to the same system. Thus with the recommendations that follow. Excepting for the hours when they are obliged to take part in community prayer, Gerson would leave it to the discretion of all religious when and how they should pray (3). In like manner with fasting and vigils. No one should be forced to do these to a degree beyond his strength (4). The purpose of both is to discipline the body, but neither should be used to such a degree as to weaken those who deprive themselves. The body should be sufficiently fed

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(1) *Ibid.* : « Crede mihi, non perdes laborem tuum, non mercedem apud Illum qui laborem et dolorem considerat. »

(2) III, 412-413 : « Vis igitur omnes affectiones gignere laudabiles, fontem amoris puram habeto, simul observans quod origo fontis hujus, et sincera bonae fidei et sanctarum cogitationum terra hauriat scaturiginem. »

(3) III, 414.

(4) III, 416 : « Si quem ergo professio regularis jam ligatum tenet, et sub auctoritate praeceptoris indiscreti, qui nec somno quantum satis est, nec cibo sinit indulgere, ille incipiens secundum meum consilium temperabit a vehementi meditatione et contritione simul cum lachrimis, ne pereat, pro sapiente vero factus insipiens. » Cfr also, III, 476, treats of what sense of proportion is needed in the religious life.

so that it become a help instead of a hindrance to the efforts of the spirit. Here again, there could be no attempt to regulate generally. For what would be agreeable to one would be difficult for another. Each must discipline himself according to his own discretion.

One of the steps that Gerson insists most upon is the practice of meditation. Without this, there can be no perfection (1). But here again he does not hold all to follow the same method. What he insists upon, is that everyone take up the exercise and make it personal. Spiritual reading, listening to sermons and the practice of vocal prayer, good as they are, do not suffice and cannot take the place of mental prayer (2). The ability to meditate must be acquired by patient effort. Many may complain of the difficulties that they experience, and declare that without the aid of a book they cannot meditate. Such as they should learn, first of all, to be alone and to be silent, and meditation will come. For how can any man persist long in prayer if his heart is stirred by every wind of worldly interest. What sort of meditation would be best suited to generate pious affections in the soul, Gerson does not attempt to say. He does, however, indicate the systems that some of the saints found practicable. But a point that he makes in the final *industria* and one upon which he insists a good deal is that a close guard be kept on the imagination (3). Into the citadel of the soul where the mystical union takes place images and phantasms may not enter. To Gerson and the devout people of his day one great saint was Saint Antony of the Desert the theme of whose temptations has found expression in many a painting of the Fifteenth Century. In order to be prepared for mystical experience one must have freed his soul from the shambles of sense imagining. If he is to mount the height of contemplation one must first have passed over the Purgative and Illuminative Ways. After that, one can look to God as a

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(1) III, 417 ff ; cfr III, 451 : « Absque meditationis exercitio nullus, secluso miraculo Dei speciali, ad perfectionem contemplationis dirigitur aut pervenit, nullus ad rectissimam Christianae religionis normam attingit. »

(2) III, 417 : « Quamobrem oportet ut consuescat homo orare spiritu et mente. »

(3) III, 420-422.

Lover from Whom all is attended and Who is loved even when He chastises (1).

Thus the mystical teaching that Gerson unfolded to the students of the University accentuated the faculty of love above that of intelligence. By means of this teaching he hoped to recall piety to its place alongside of Philosophy, and to make the students more eager to live the truth than to seek after it endlessly. At the time that he drew up his system of Mystical Theology there was reason enough to warrant his going to the extreme of anti-intellectualism that Nicholas of Cusa and others embraced later in the Century (2). As usual the reaction of Gerson was a *via media,* and while he elevated the affections to a higher plane than the intellect, he did not scout at the power of the intelligence to attain its end. Intellectual pride was the evil that he sought to uproot. The cure that he suggested was humble submission to God and dependence upon His guidance. Conditions of the time made it impossible that he should do otherwise. For, if there was evident in the University a tendency to lay too great stress on the ability of the mind to attain truth, there was also to be avoided the emotional excesses that had resulted outside the sphere of the University from a too keen application of the theory of seeking God in one's own heart.

This idea that Gerson had of presenting the theory of Mystical Theology in the class-room was not entirely original in him. As he himself said on one occasion there were some professors in the University group who strove to make a practical application of the lessons that they taught (3). From the titles of the tracts that Henry of Langenstein wrote we may conclude that his was quite the same practice (4). So that Gerson had

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(1) III, 422 : « Invola tunc ad amplexus sponsi, stringe pectus illud divinum totis amicitiae purissimae brachiis, fige oscula castissima pacis exuperantis omnem sensum, et ut dicere subinde possis gratulabunda et amorosa devotione ; *dilectus meus mihi, et ego illi.* »

(2) De Wulf, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 231 ff ; Vansteenberghe, *o. c.*, p. 361 ff.

(3) III, 1436 ; cfr above, p. 84. « Prosunt tamen nec nego probatorum virorum colloquia, qui ascensum contemplationis et suae arduitatis discrimina, suo labore suisque periculis experti sunt. »

(4) Amongst the works of Langenstein cited by Feret, *o. c.*, vol. III, pp. 265-267 are the following : Tracts on the *Our Father*, *Hail Mary*, on

a proximate influence to stimulate his ideal. But what was no doubt the compelling force over him was the example of the great St. Bonaventure whose lectures on Mystical Theology had been directed to the students of Paris in an earlier day (1). Bonaventure was the saint preferred by Gerson, who could never see why he was so neglected by the men of his Order (2). Certain writings of the saint became the inspiration of Gerson's own mystical longing (3), and no doubt to the same source must be traced his determination to make the teaching of Mystical Theology in the schools the chief avenue for the reform.

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the *Discernment of Spirits*, on the *Consolation of Theology*, *Rules for the Distinction of Mortal from Venial Sin* and the *Mirror of the Soul*.

(1) In the winter 1273-1274, St. Bonaventure gave a series of conferences on mystical theology at the University, under the title : *Collationes in Hexaemeron*. Cfr Carvalho De Castro, O. M., *St. Bonaventure*, pp. 105, 118, Paris, 1923.

(2) I, 117 ; I, 91 : « Nec admirari sufficio qualiter patres et fratres minores dimisso tanto doctore (St. Bonaventure) qualem nescio si unquam Studium Parisiense habuerit converterunt se ad nescio quos novellos, pro quibus parati sunt pedibus et manibus decertare. »

(3) I, 21 : « Porro si quaeratur a me, quis inter ceteros Doctores plus videatur idoneus, respondeo sine praejudicio quod Dominus Bonaventura, quoniam in docendo solidus est et securus, pius et justus et devotus. »

CHAPTER V

PRACTICAL AIDS TO PERFECTION

In the Fourteenth Century, as in our own day, there was a conscious effort on the part of those who took interest in the spiritual life to define just what constituted the essence of mysticism. Opinions varied then much as they do now. Spiritual systems that accentuated the importance of abnegation, of purity of heart or of purity of mind found many to defend them. For some, such as the Brethren of the Common Life, the imitation of Christ became the theme of all devotion ; for others, it was the love of God or union with God. There were, besides, the various heretical sects whose ideas on the mystical life often ran to extremes of quietism or illuminism which the Church has many times in her history had to condemn. The effect of false mysticism was that it dampened the ardor of many who might otherwise have been true mystics. But all those who took up with a spiritual system were, as a rule, as ready to defend it as they were their particular prejudice in Philosophy. All claimed to find confirmation for their teaching in the works of Denys, the great authority on the mystical way, whose doctrines were often indefinite enough to permit interpretations to vary one from the other.

Gerson himself tells us of the existence of many schools of mysticism that were separate and opposed (1). What was his

(1) In the *Tract on the Magnificat* which was written in the year 1429, Gerson mentions the different opinions then held as to what constituted mysticism. « Multi multa locuti sunt et nos multoties jam inter multos de et super verbis Dionysii dum tractat de mystica theologia et divina sapientia christianorum. Dixerunt aliqui quod consistit haec theologia in abnegatione omnium a Deo, alii quod in affectu et dilectione, nonnulli quod in intelligentiae puritate, alii quod in mentis ad Deum collectione, vel unione, alii quod in devotione seu mentis elevatione, alii quod in raptu vel extasi vel mentis alienatione ». All of which positions Gerson promises to discuss, the while he declares that, for him, Mystical Theology consists in the union of the soul with God. « Existit in experimen-

reaction to the heretical teaching we have already seen (1). So there need be no further mention of it here. It has also been indicated how he tried to overcome the prejudice that the scholars had against the mystical ambitions of devout people, and how he set before them a devotional system that was based on love (2). It was thus that he trusted to overcome the supercilious intellectualism that was in vogue and to supplant it by a sane mysticism. But although he seemed from the first to be given to a spirituality that emphasized the emotional side of man's nature, and though he stressed the necessity of developing the affective faculty more than the intellectual, this does not mean that he would eliminate from the spiritual life the role of the intelligence. It is true that for a time he believed that the soul could rise to a state of estatic union without any previous knowledge, and apart from any stimulus of the intellect (3). Such was the substance of his lectures to the Theologians. But to emphasize the importance of the affective over the intellectual faculty would imply that a real distinction existed between them, and this Gerson was not ready to admit (4). The Nominalistic bent of his

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tali et gratuita unione seu collectione et exultatione humilium *mentis corde sui cum Deo.* » IV, 341. A further allignment of opinions occurs a few pages further on. When Gerson speaks of the manner of experimental knowledge had of God. « Experimentalis cognitio Dei potest intelligi per ablationem fieri per septem modis, quorum duo spectant maxime proposito nostro. Unus ad intelligentiam, alius ad devotionem. Unus modus est per nominis impositionem, alius per voluntariam acceptionem, seu credulitatem. Tertius, per realem ablationem. Quartus, per intelligentiae depurationem. Quintus, per intelligentiae perspicacitatem. Sextus, per intelligentiae deiformitatem. Septimus, per intelligentiae simplicissimam unitatem. » IV, 345.

(1) Cfr above, pp. 121 ff., 233 ff. In the tract on the *Consolations of Theology*, I, 174, he cited teachings of the Beghards and the Turlupini « qui deliramenta cordis sui pro Dei sentimentis amplexantes, turpiter erraverunt », and condemned them along with other false mystical doctrines. « Alii ita se Deo voluerunt tradere quod omnia Deus ageret in eis tantummodo passive se habentibus. Alii per unionem apicis mentis cum Spiritu Sancto tradunt habere scientiam mysticam de Deo, ita tamen quod Deus non apprehendatur sub quacumque ratione vel entis vel veri vel boni. »

(2) Cfr above, Part Two, Chapter VI. *Mysticism in the Schools.*

(3) I, 115 : « Cum cessatione omnis operis intellectualis, sicut aliquando credidit studiositas mea. »

(4) III, 370 : « Dicamus ergo de anima rationali quod ipsa pro diversi-

early training would not permit him to regard the faculties of the soul as being in any way independent from each other or from the soul (1). So there could be no question of denying to the intellect a share in the action of the will. It is not surprising that we find Gerson teaching, contrary to the ideas of Hugh of Balma, that knowledge has a part in mystical contemplation (2).

At first sight, one would be tempted to say that the Chancellor had abruptly turned from his early teaching. He had indeed changed his mind, but there was not in that as much of a contradiction as one would suppose. For he never abandoned his ideas on the necessity of love above knowledge. In this he was faithful to Bonaventure and the Franciscan mysticism. But he came to realize that Denys, and Bonaventure himself, did not pretend to eliminate thought or intellectual perception; and he changed his opinion accordingly (3). He describes his action as follows : « The height of perfection consists in union of the soul with God. This is the Mystical Theology of which so many have written at length. Not a few hold that it is question of a communication of knowledge. Others say that the affections play the larger role, and that with the action of *synderesis* all intellectual participation must cease (4). » « This opinion I once accepted, thinking that I was following the mind of Bonaventure and those who com-

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tate officiorum et agibilium distinctas vires habet; distinctas inquam non re sed nomine. »

(1) De Wulf, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 171.

(2) III, 422-428 : *Tractatus de elucidatione scholastica mysticae theologiae.* This tract was written as a criticism of Hugh of Balma's opinion that previous or concomitant knowledge is not necessary for mystical union. Cfr IV, 268 and IV, 337 : « Fuit opinio celebris quod theologia christianorum magis est affectiva proprie quam speculativa vel practica. Valet haec consideratio pro simplicibus christianis, et militat adversus superbos,... qui nihil credere volunt nisi prius intelligunt. »

Note : Up till recent years there has been certain confusion as to the identity of the author of the *Viae Sion lugent*, or better, the *De mystica theologia*. The title of Hugh of Balma now seems well established. Cfr *Dict. de th. Cath.*, vol. VI, p. 2191 and vol. VII, p. 245.

(3) I, 115.

(4) *Ibid.* : « Nonnulli ponentes eam in communicatione primae voluntatis, vel abstractiva in suis attributis, vel quodam modo intuitiva et expletiva sanctitatis. Constituerunt hanc alii in sola dilectione synderesis vel apicis mentis, cum cessatione operis intellectualis... »

mented on Denys. But it seems to me now that Mystical Theology, which is the union of the soul with God, consists neither of the working of the will nor of the intellect, although both are necessary as dispositions. When the soul itself has been purified, simplified and freed from all solicitude, all desire and all imagining, then Mystical Theology exists (1). » To explain more precisely his position, Gerson seizes upon the example of the manner in which sanctifying Grace acts in the soul. « Grace does not unite the intellect alone, nor does it draw the will alone to God; but it acts upon the whole soul. So too with Mystical Theology. It is not concerned with the working of one or other faculty, but with the union of the soul with God (2). »

How much of a stir this change of opinion must have created it is not easy to say. Amongst those who knew the Chancellor personally and amongst those who had many times appealed to him for direction, it could not have come as a surprise, for it was in complete harmony with his whole spirit. But is not likely that it went unchallenged. As he himself indicated, there were adherents of many schools of mysticism (3), and, not unlikely, some, such as the Augustinians came forth to defend the superiority of the intellect, and some sons of St. Francis to uphold the importance of the will (4). The circumstance in which Gerson expressed his opinion was not such as to attract a great deal of attention. It was when he was at Lyons : when the English were in control of the city of Paris : when those at the University were distracted by the changes of policy that were being forced upon them : and

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(1) *Ibid.* : « Hodie primo mysticum nescio quid aliud aperitur quod si scholastico more debeat reserari, videtur quod hujusmodi mystica theologia docens unionem cum Deo neque consistit in opere intellectus nec in operatione affectus. »

(2) *Ibid.* : « Sicut ergo gratia non conjungit immediate Deo intellectum vel voluntatem et ceteras vires, sed principaliter et immediate essentiam animae, sive sit distincta formaliter vel essentialiter a potentiis sive non. Sic theologia mystica non respicit operationem intellectus vel affectus. »

(3) IV, 341.

(4) Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. II, pp. vii-viii, 159, 229. Cfr also Rimaud, *Thomisme et méthode* (Bibliothèque des archives de philosophie), p. 265 Paris, 1925.

when he was directing his attention to a limited circle of friends. It is not therefore surprising if there has been left no record of opposition raised against his views.

Some twenty-five years after his death, at a time when his prestige had grown out of all proportion and men put him on a level with St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas, there arose in southern Germany a controversy as to the correctness of his teaching (1). The circumstance that gave rise to the controversy was precisely this change of opinion in the Chancellor.

The chief of the movement was one who had been for many years a staunch admirer of Gerson and who had taken the trouble to copy many of his tracts, because he thought him to be completely in accord with his own views. This was Vincent of Aggsbach, a Carthusian, who was in close relation with the Benedictines of the Congregation of Melk (2), in whose activity for reform he was intensely preoccupied. Vincent had been, for long, in correspondence with the Prior of the monastery of Melk and had found with him community of interest. When the fervor of Gerson was upon him he had communicated his admiration to his friend, and had tried to encourage in him a like cult of the spirit and the theories of the Chancellor (3). When, however, he learned to read more closely into the tracts he once admired and when he came upon those writings which were the fruit of more mature years, he learned that the ideas of Gerson were not in such harmony with his own. It was a rude shock to Vincent, and made him turn completely from his esteem of Gerson. More than that, he felt in duty bound to correct the appreciations of the Prior of Melk and to prove to him that the Chancellor was not true to the spirit of Denys (4).

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(1) Vansteenberghe, *Autour de la docte ignorance (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, Band XIV, Heft 2-4). Munster in Westphalia, 1915, gives the story of the controversy, and publishes the principal documents. A supplementary number of the *Beiträge*, issued for a celebration in honor of Clement Baeumker contains an analysis of some of the correspondence. Cfr *Festgabe zum 60. Geburtstag Clemens Baeumker*, pp. 357-364, Munster in Westphalia, 1913, article by Vansteenberghe entitled : *Un écrit de Vincent d'Aggsbach contre Gerson.*

(2) Vansteenberghe, *Autour de la docte ignorance*, pp. 28-29, 58, 189 ff.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 29.

(4) *Ibid.* p. 189 : « Idem doctor venerabilis non semper concordat cum

Vincent was a man whose appreciations soured with age. He had many ardent dislikes and had convictions that he could not change. Amongst other things was his distrust for everything that came from the College of Cardinals. He perpetuated the suspicion that actuated the members of the Councils of Constance and Basle, and was a confirmed advocate of the theory of the supremacy of the Council over the Pope (1). For that reason, he held out against the policies of Martin V and Eugene IV who, he said, had betrayed the interests of the Church. He had his own ideas as to the method to be followed in securing the reform and they were surely not in harmony with the practices of Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa. For although the Cardinal was the official agent for the reform of monasteries, or perhaps, because he was the one appointed by the Pope for the work, Vincent stood out against him. The fact that Cusa was in support of a measure was sufficient reason for Vincent to take the side of the opposition. So it was to be in the controversy which broke. Cusa was to take the defense of Gerson against the charges of Vincent, and Vincent was to lose all interest in proving that Gerson was wrong to turn the brunt of his attack against the Cardinal (2).

The matter began quite innocently enough. Vincent wrote to tell John of Weilhaim, Prior of Melk, of his new judgment of Gerson. By way of summoning authorities in his favor, he cited different commentators of Denys, the chief of whom were Hugh of Balma, Thomas of Saint-Victor, Abbot of Verceil, and Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln (3). In the works of all of them he had found reason to believe that Gerson was unwarranted in assigning to the intellect a share

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textu Dionysii necque cum expositoribus ipsius, necque cum practicis ejusdem artis, nec etiam cum seipso. » Such was the thesis that Vincent set out to prove to his friend John of Weilhaim, in June 1453.

(1) *Ibid.* pp. 23-27 ; p. 193, gives the text of Vincent's letter as follows : « patet hoc quod a fundamento Dionysii recessit, per verba quae in libris suis hinc inde inveniuntur. » Cfr I, 174, IV, 268.

(2) It is striking that in his eagerness to attack Cusa, Vincent almost forgot his grudge against Gerson. Cfr Vansteenberghe, *o. c.*, pp. 204-212, also p. 59 : « De Gerson lui-même il n'est plus beaucoup question. »

(3) *Ibid.* p. 191 : « Cum ergo beatus Dionysius, conscriptor hujus artis doceat ignote, id est sine adminiculo intellectus, affectus consurgere. » This, says Vincent is the sense taken by his commentators.

in the act of contemplation (1). By way of rousing the attention of Weilhaim to the truth of his assertions and also to improve his own conviction, Vincent asked that the manuscripts of Hugh and of Grosseteste be sent to him (2). As it happened, Melk did not possess the writings sought, and John of Weilhaim forwarded the request of Vincent to Tegernsee to ask if the monks at that monastery could supply what was wanting. Along with it went Vincent's attack against the Chancellor. This letter of Vincent, since it contained his appreciation of the worth of Gerson was doubly sure to attract attention, for the Benedictines admired Gerson very much, and soon the rumor went around that Vincent was challenging the correctness of the Chancellor's mystical teaching.

After several efforts failed to locate the manuscripts that were requested by Vincent, Weilhaim took advice from some friends and sent the letter of Vincent on to Nicholas of Cusa, — he being considered the best authority on the mysticism of Denys, and one who would in all probability be able to furnish copies of the commetaries of Hugh and Grosseteste from his own library (3). But Nicholas, when he answered, defended Gerson and declared that he had not done violence to the doctrine of Denys. For Denys had no intention of saying that the soul could rise by sentiment alone and without the help of knowledge (4). Other authorities who had heard of the charges of Vincent now gave expression to their opinions. Chief amongst them were Bernard of Waging, Prior of Tegernsee, a staunch admirer of Cusa, and Marquard Sprenger of Munich. It was not long before the Prior of Melk had accumulated a little booklet of letters that refuted the ideas of Vincent and this he sent on to him as a point of interest (5).

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(1) *Ibid.* pp. 30 ff, 191-192. Cfr *Un écrit de Vincent d'Aggsbach contre Gerson.*

(2) Vansteenberghe, *Autour de la docte ignorance*, pp. 32, 201, note 4. Vansteenberghe holds that the Hugh spoken of, and whose commentary was requested, was Hugh of Saint-Victor and not Hugh of Balma.

(3) *Ibid.* pp. 32-4.

(4) Cusa answered the charges of Vincent point by point. He declared that he did not consider very highly the authority of those upon whose views Vincenl depended.

(5) Vansteenberghe, *Autour..,,* pp. 34, 58 ff.

Vincent lost no time in making a response to his opponents. Under the title of *Gerchumar*, — suggestive of his belief that they were all under the influence of the teaching of the Chancellor, — he grouped all the arguments that were used by Cusa, Bernard of Waging and Sprenger (1). For the Chancellor he had only passing interest. Chiefly important was the task of refuting Cusa and his friends. As indication of the strength of his own position, he summoned Verceil, Hugh and Grosseteste, men who were in accord in their interpretation of Denys and who approached closest to his spirit. Their reputations surely, were as good, if not better than that of Gerson, reputed though he be, and the concerted authority of *Vercellinco* », as he styled his own side of the question, should certainly suffice to overwhelm Cusa and his satellites (2). Against all, Vincent urged that knowledge could never be preferred in any way to mysticism, and therefore that ignorance was the surest avenue to true mysticism. This ignorance was not to be tempered by any phrase proper to Cusa either. It was no « learned ignorance. » For « learned » would imply a personal activity. It would give scope to some action of the intellect, and this Vincent would not accept (3).

The idea that anyone would try to reconcile Mystical Theology with Scholasticism was more than Vincent could tolerate. For him, reason had absolutely to be eliminated from mysticism. How then could he accept Gerson's opinion that there could be no question of love without some knowledge accompanied it? All had been well as long as he felt that the Chancellor was given to his own opinions. But when he came to the study of Gerson's *Scholastic Exposition of Mystical Theology*, and when he found him opposing in the person of Hugh of Balma the position that he had himself taken Vincent could hardly hold his patience (4). Impossible that mysticism

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(1) Vansteenberghe, *Autour...*, pp. 58-59.

(2) *Ibid*, p. 191 : « Et hi tres supra nominati, utique non parvi estimationis viri quibus olim d. cancellarium equare vel etiam preferre conabar ». Cfr also pp. 28-32.

(4) Vincent, of course, blames Gerson for the teaching of Cusa. Cfr *Autour...*, pp. 29, 192, 197.

(4) III, 423-428 : *De elucidatione scholasticae mysticae theologiae.*

could be made to include knowledge or that the intelligence have part in contemplation ! Yet Gerson defined contemplation as an act of the intelligence and said that Mystical Theology was realized in contemplation (1).

This caused the outburst of Vincent. « Foolish fellow, » he cried. « You confuse things so that no one will ever be led by your writings to be a true mystic (2). » Gerson was not absolute enough for the Carthusian. His discussion of mysticism was too calm. Too often, the Chancellor stated positions which might be held and did not try to controvert what he did not himself accept. On one occasion he declared that there were two ways of interpreting mystical union : the affective, which as he said, « some commentators of Denys hold, » and the intellectual (3). This statement sufficed for Vincent. It indicated to him that Gerson knew that the first was the true opinion of Denys, since he said that some « commentators of Denys held it. » It proved also that Gerson no longer held such views since he did not declare himself (4). The reasoning is rather specious, and the force of argument is such as to impress a

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(1) Worse than that, Vincent recalls that Gerson once said it was heretical to hold that contemplation could be had without knowledge. Cfr Vansteenberghe, *Autour...*, pp. 193-194 : « Item in tertia prosa 4i Libri *de consolatione theologiae* consurrectionem ignotam, id est sine cogitatione praevia vel comite inter haereticales errores posuit. » The passage Vincent refers to here is I, 174 which we have already quoted. Cfr p. 248, note 1. Again, Vansteenberghe, *Autour...*, p. 199 : « Tandem consideratione 27 *(de mystica theologia)*, etiam contemplationem et mysticam theologiam pro eodem sumit. » Cfr III, 383.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 199 : « Si fuissem praesens dum praemissa verba dictavit, ego dixissem sibi : insanis Gerson, multe te littere ad insaniam perducunt ; mirabiliter enim involvas materias, et vere ex tuis numquam aliquis fiet bonus contemplator aut misticus discipulus. »

(3) Vincent refers to the tract on *Practical Mysticism* (III, 421) where Gerson says : « At vero si notitia illa sit solum experimentalis in affectu supremo unito Deo per amorem, vel si possit dici intellectualis,... dignissimum esset consideratione, nam habet pars quaelibet suos defensores elevatissimos. Sunt nempe qui exponentes Dionysium primum tenent ; sunt alii dicentes habere posse ultra praedictam experimentalem intellectivum conceptum quamvis non intuitivum divini esse. »

(4) Vincent's comment is as follows : « Ex praedictis verbis elicio duo. Primum quod Gerson fatetur expositores Dionysii primum tenere. Secundum est quod probat se recessisse ab eis in hoc loco. » Cfr Vansteenberghe, *Autour...*, p. 198.

temperament similar only to that of Vincent himself. But there could be no half measures with Vincent. If the Chancellor did not take sides it was a sign of weak-heartedness. No good could ever come of his mysticism because of this « error ».

No need to declare that Vincent had his opinions well set. The idea of his changing was quite beyond the realm of possibility. But there can be no doubt that the great spur that prompted the attack of Vincent was that he had misinterpreted the teaching of the Chancellor. His mistake took rise, as he admits, from a too hasty reading, and it received a final touch when he attributed to Gerson the authorship of the treatise on the *Seven Roads to Eternity* (1). The author of that work was drawn much more completely to affective mysticism than was Gerson, who, no matter how much he may have stressed the emotional in order to counteract the effects of intellectual curiosity, never went to the point of suppressing the role of the intellect in mystical experience.

Vincent was then mistaken when he supposed a contradiction in Gerson. For the grounds of his comparison was the authorship of the *Seven Roads to Eternity*, which he claimed to be in complete harmony with the teaching of Balma, Grosseteste and Thomas of Saint-Victor (2). But Rudolph of Bibroch, and not Gerson, was the author of the tract in question, and far from showing contradiction, the ideas of Gerson had gone through a development that was natural and wise. His mysticism received thus the same cachet that

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(1) Cfr Vansteenberghe, *Autour...*, p. 191-192 and 201-202 : « Prima est ut quemdam errorem meum in una cedularium contentum, quo videlicet videbar Gersonem expositoribus beati Dionysii equare vel praeferre revocarem, quod et facio per praesentes. » *Ibid.*, p. 29 V. says « Ce qu'il reprochera le plus vivement à Gerson sera précisément de ne l'avoir pas reconnu. »

(2) Cfr I, 174 ; I, 115 and III, 422-428. Gerson states the manner in which Hugh interpreted Denys the Pseudo-Areopagite, thus : « Scripserunt alii, nominatim Hugo de Balma in tractatu *De triplici via in Deum*, ubi determinat finaliter et ex intentione quod apex mentis fertur in Deum per amorem exstaticum absque praevia vel concomitante cognitione. » He answers, III, 423, that natural love cannot be entirely separate from knowledge, nor can infused love, « stare ut amorem superinfusum comitetur actualis cognitio » (III, 425), and that Mystical Theology demands also some knowledge of God (III, 426). Cfr Vansteenberghe, *Autour de la docte ignorance*, p. 191-198.

he impressed on his reform theories. It was moderate, not susceptible to exaggeration, and personal in its appeal. He never declared against the power of the affections as an incentive to mysticism. He never denied that charity is the bond of perfection (1). But the love that he asked for was to be full, — a response of the whole being and not of a part only to the command : « Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind and with thy whole strength. » This was the test of the mysticism that the Chancellor advanced not to the scholars alone but to all who embraced the Christian Faith.

As we have already had occasion to note, there were some few in Gerson's day who held that all perfection was summed up only in the religious life. Those who did not enter religion became by the same token, imperfect (2). There was a belief, — which, later on, Luther was to declare to be generally accepted, — that to become a member of the true religion it was necessary to enter community-life and accept the three vows as the sure way to perfection (3). Amongst the lay folk there

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(1) In his last writing on Mystical Theology the power of love held the central theme. Cfr IV, 49 : « Amo te si profertur a creatura rationali Deo toto corde suo, tota anima et tota mente per pietatem Fidei, Spei et Charitatis ipsa conjungitur immediate Deo suo. » IV, 53 : « Amor fruitivus crebrius in exercitio debet accipi respectu boni, quam intellectivus respectu veri. Esset hic perscrutatio grandis super eminentia duplicis hujus potentiae rationalis, quorum Aristoteles et sequaces etiam Theologi sicut sanctus Thomas videntur intellectus praeferre dignitatem. Alii vero magis sequentes Augustinum et Christianam pietatem certissimis rationibus voluntatem anteponunt sicut dominus Bonaventura, qui propterea ex doctrina et vita pietatis circa charitatem cognominatus est Seraphicus. Solius itaque cultura intellectus speculativi quantumcumque subtilis cadit in illud apostolicum : *scientia inflat.* » Cfr also, III, 462.

(2) Such was the principle upon which the arguments of Matthew Grabon against the Brethren of the Common Life were based. Cfr III, 437 : « Fuit tempore Constantiensis Concilii quidam illic frater Ordinis Praedicatorum, asserens nullum esse posse in statu perfectionis, nisi tria vota cum professione solemni susciperet. »

(3) The refutation of the theories of Grabon made by Gerson before the Council of Constance show the character of his arguments. Gerson argued that only the Christian religion, instituted by Christ, has a right to the name religion and that for proper observance of it one does not necessarily have to follow the Counsels. « Religio Christiana non requirit ad perfectiorem sui observationem tam in praeceptis quam in conciliis quod superaddatur alia religio. »

was a tradition that indicates to a degree with what reverence the monastic habit was held. For many of them found consolation, when they felt Death drawing nigh, by being clothed in the religous garb (1). To certain exalted spirits within the congregations the donning of the habit was itself a sure pledge of salvation. This belief gave to the religious state an importance which « neither the founders, nor the Church intended (2). » The obligation to be perfect as also the Heavenly Father is perfect did not so readily reach fulfillment. Nor were the stages to be gone through of themselves infallible. As Denifle points out, the teaching of Gerson on this point if in full harmony with that of the great spiritual writers of the Church and depends directly on the writings of St. Thomas (3). In his advices to religious, Gerson harked back to his original principle and declared that perfection was open to all. If there were not more in the world who attained perfection, it was not for want of means at hand. For actually there were many who attained perfection whose state in life could not be called a state of perfection. These were arguments that he raised against Matthew Grabon at the Council of Constance (4). But fortunately men of the type of Grabon were rare, and there were not many who contested to the clergy and to the people the ability to heed the invitation to imitate Christ.

But because the opportunity was open to all, all did not necessarily become perfect. What we know of the period in which Gerson lived proves that amply enough. The controversy is mentioned here chiefly as an indication that there was need for moderation in appreciations of what constituted perfection. It may serve to give proper setting to Gerson's theo-

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(1) Gougaud, *Dévotions et pratiques ascétiques du moyen âge*, pp. 129-142. Paris, 1925.

(2) Denifle, *Luther et le luthéranisme*, transl. J. Paquier, vol. I, p. 287, Paris, 1913.

(3) The tract in which he gives most attention to the question of the perfection to be attained in the religious life is based almost completely on the doctrine of St. Thomas in the *Summa*, IIa IIae, questio clxxxiv, artics 3-5. Gerson's work is entitled : *De consiliis evangelicis et statu perfectionis*, and is to be found in Dupin, II, 669-681.

(4) II, 678 : « Multi perfecti qui non sunt in statu perfectionis. » Cfr III, 440.

ries, which were intended to respond to the precise needs of his time. No need to recall the conditions under which he worked, nor the problems that he faced. These have been sufficiently described in the Chapters which deal with the *Reform of the People* and *Gerson and the Mystics of this Day*.

There can be no question that the people as a rule were well disposed. If they erred, it was because of ignorance and not by malice. They needed guides. They were often the prey of charlatans. What they wanted was a spirituality that was based on the Gospels and the writings of the great mystics, and this Gerson proposed to give them. None who studied his teaching could fail to appreciate that it was a deliberate attempt to supply a remedy for definite ills. No one could deny that it is a sane system, inspired by the lessons of the great masters. Nor could anyone fail to notice that it was a system that rested on a sober judgment of humankind and throbbed with ardent desire to do good to all. We have already followed in outline the development of the mystical ideas of Gerson. But for a better appreciation of the system it may be profitable to look more into details and seek the wisdom of the Chancellor in his smaller tracts, in his letters, in his sermons, or in his meditations. From these various sources practical directions may be drawn that are certainly of as much value to-day as they were hundreds of years ago. It is with that intention that they are offered, in the hope that many who feel the impulse for the mystical life might find in Gerson a safe guide and a true friend.

The chief characteristic of the mystical teaching of Gerson are that it is based on humility, self-knowledge and confidence in God, that it is in perfect harmony with the doctrines and the sacramental dispensation of the Church and that it leaves, withal, ample room for freedom of method in those who aspire to become mystics (1). If he talks of prayer, it is not to dictate what method must be used. Similarly, with meditation. He declared what was his own practice, and we find it to be much what is known as a prayer of Faith (2). But despite

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(1) Not that he leaves each free to follow his own inclinations and direct his own effort, II, 773 ; III, 245-246, 616.

(2) III, 417-418, 450 : « meditatio non solum in cognitiva sed etiam in

his own experience of the worth of his method, he did not try to foist it on everybody, but indicated that each was to seek to pray in a way that was best adapted to himself (1). He is quick to suggest means to overcome the difficulties that hamper spiritual progress. But he does not attempt to control every gesture of prayer. As long as precautions are taken to avoid error, he leaves the rest to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His aim was to give the doctrines of the masters (2). Love and not reason dominated with him, and the purpose of meditation became not a way to new knowledge but to a better and a stronger love.

The virtue that he held as fundamental for the whole structure of spirituality was humility. This was the basis upon which every one should build (3). Virtues that rose from any other foundation would have no stability. But humility, to be prized, had to be honest. From the standpoint of Grace and the supernatural no one could hold himself in esteem. All that he had of good came from God and without the further assistance of Grace he could do nothing. But it was not humility to accuse one's self of all the evil in the world. It was not humility to despair of salvation (4). Neither did he who despised the gifts that had been entrusted to him and failed to cooperate with Grace possess true humility. The essence of the virtue was to make for honest appreciation of one's own worth, to work out one's salvation in fear and to trust the outcome to God. To Gerson, no evil was greater than an overweening self-confidence. « What manner of pride is more

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affectiva ». III, 487-504. Cfr L. de Besse, *La Science de la Prière*, pp. 87 ff, p. 134, 2nd ed., Paris, 1924.

(1) III, 571.

(2) III, 361 : « Ubi eniti debeo si forte piis aspirante conatibus Deo poterit studium meum ea ipsa ad communem intelligentiam deducere, quae super theologia mystica, haec est occulta, divinus tradidit Dionysius. Conari praeterea meditor si ea quae de contemplatione, meditatione, raptu, extasi, et de excessu mentis, de divisione spiritus et animae et similibus Doctores elevati scriptis reliquerunt. » IV, 341.

(3) III, 1412 : « Sanctus Paulus cujus erat docere omnes virtutes et praesertim humilitatem quae est fundamentum sine quo omnis cumulus virtutum inane quiddam est et pulvis ad ventum. »

(4) *Ibid.* « Nemo debet sine causa seipsum culpare, hoc enim esset stultitia vel vanitas pejor interdum quam seipsum laudare. »

dangerous than for a person to think that he alone knows what is good for himself. There is the cause of so many downfalls when self-esteem, or secret ambition, or some other temptation of the evil one are made manifest, and the sole cure for it all is humility (1). » The reason why many of the learned could not reach the heights of perfection was that they could not bow themselves to this virtue. The reason why so many poor and uninstructed were permitted to enjoy spiritual favors was that they schooled themselves in humility (2).

According to the Chancellor, the evil of the day was due to an exaggerated degree of self-love. « When I turn my eyes to consider the state of the clergy and of the Church, » he cried, « I am filled with trembling. For everywhere I see the reign of self-love which seeks only her own glory and her own advantage (3). » His sermons and his tracts, especially those directed to the clergy, were aimed to overcome this great defect. For them in particular, but for others as well, he deemed it the greatest need that they come to know themselves. This was the knowledge that he placed above all the sciences (4). « No need to go great distances, to haunt the schools, or to seek to possess a copy of all the books that appear, in order to acquire the Science of the Saints. We ourselves are the books that must be consulted. The school that we must attend is that of our own heart (5). » No one could, according to Gerson, afford to neglect this branch of learning, and no shame was greater than that of the man who did not know himself (6).

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(1) II, 773 : « Est enim humilitas in anima duplex, alia in voluntate, alia in intellectu, utraque difficilius obtineri. Sed, meo judicio, plus est difficultatis in secunda, quia nihil insidiatur dolosius, neque blanditur fallacius, neque subintrat imperceptibilius.... quam reputatio proprii judicii in causa sua. »

(2) III, 367-368, 574.

(3) III, 1381-1382 : « Cum oculos cogitationis meae ad clericalem et sanctae ecclesiae converto statum et generaliter totius Christianitatis, horrores profecto, fremitus, tribulationes in me descendunt. »

(4) This savors much of the teaching of the Victorines who insisted on self-knowledge as the best means to come to the knowledge of God and upon self-purification as more important than great learning.

(5) III, 1385 : « Libri in nosmetipsos sunt, nos scholae ipsae sumus. »

(6) III, 1384 : « Seipsum cognoscere est scientia quam sine magno vituperio ignorare non possumus ; qui enim de omnibus praefatis scientiis quaereret si quis eas non ignoraret absque verecundia respon-

Along with this practice of keeping check on the different gates that lead in to the soul, Gerson taught that no weapon was more successful against temptation than steady resistance (1). He held that the reason for much of the evil in the world was that men did not think of it (2). To guide the well-disposed in their conflict against temptations and scruples he drew up many tracts that are full of wise counsel (3). Of chief value, however, is the tract which was sent to his sisters, in 1408, in answer to their appeal for direction. Paris was in disorder at the time and there was fighting going on in the provinces. So, with his mind full of the activity that he was seeing, day by day, about him, Gerson portrayed the defense of the soul quite as one would the defense of a city. The thought of the Last Things, vivid appreciation of the penalty of sin and the reward of virtue, and an abiding trust in God : these are the attitudes that were fundamentally necessary. There were, however, to be added to these : a *foresight* that would keep watch in the citadel of the soul and detect the beginnings of temptation, a *discretion* that would keep guard over the gates and see that no enemy entered in, *circumspection* that would drive away distraction, and *secret exhortation* to arouse courage in the repulse of the tempter (4).

There is no note of quictism to be discovered in these ideas of Gerson ; nor could such teaching be said to base itself

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dere posset aliquis se eas ignorare, sed absque verecundia dici non posset ab aliquo quod seipsum ignoraret. »

(1) III, 580 : « Unde pro regula generale habendum est ut de quacumque tentatione de qua impugnamur semper contraria objiciamus... Sic nec spiritus hominis vincitur a diabolo nisi consensus voluntatis adveniat. »

(2) III, 808. The thought of death was, of course, the balance by which everything was to be tried.

(3) The following are of chief value as evidencing Gerson's theories as to the manner of combating temptations and scruples : III, 579-589 : *Tractatus de remediis contra pusillanimitatem, scrupulositatem, deceptiones inimici.* III, 589-602 : *De diversis diaboli tentationes.* III, 805-829 : *Dialogue spirituel de Gerson avec ses sœurs.* III, 243-246 : *Contra foedam tentationem blasphemiae.* III, 161-164 : *De refraenatione linguae.* III, 605-619 : *De exercitiis discretis devotorum simplicium.* III, 436-468 : Various tracts on the *Perfection and Purification of the heart.* III, 157-161 : *De signis bonis et malis.*

(4) III, 817 ff.

on despair in the value of personal effort. His was a doctrine of action that found a counterpart in his own life. There was in it no room for scruples or despair. The motto from which all was judged was : Trust in God and do your best ! (1) He was not minded to assign to human nature the ability to earn initial Grace. Often and again, he protested that he had no Pelagian leanings (2). But neither did he seek to excuse evil on the ground that it could not be helped. Else, where would be the force of his confidence that « we are God's co-adjutors (3) » ? His Nominalistic training itself could account for the fact that he embraced a mysticism that favored personal effort and that was the very antithesis of quietism. And yet, though he was of a Nominalistic bent, he did not pretend to do more than co-operate with the Grace that was offered him. Any examination of his works, however perfunctory, would convince one of the dogmatic foundation of his mystical teaching.

The reaction of the Chancellor to the vogue of the new devotions and his insistence on the Sacraments as the chief aid to perfection bear out, however, the harmony between his teachings and the tradition and doctrine of the Church. His anger at the heretics for posing to be perfect beyond the need of the Sacraments and for putting more faith in some external practice or personal devotion than in the exercise of the virtues is reflected to a lesser degree in the suspicion with which he held innovations of any kind (4). Thus he urged all the Bishops to

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(1) II, 773 ; III, 1078 ; II, 472 : « Confidens de misericordia Dei et bonitate studeat proficere de die in diem, ascendendo de virtute in virtutem ut tandem possit videre Deum. »

(2) III, 425 : « Absit haec pelagiana temeritas. » III, 7.

(3) III, 398, 400.

(4) Thus in the tract entitled : *De directione seu rectitudine cordis*, he mentions some of the devotions of the day. « Transeamus ad alios cultus sanctorum, qui ut plurimum superstitionis habere videntur... Considerandum est quod paucissimorum est ad divina se erigere, vel elevare nisi per corporalia... Amplius distinguendum est quod de observationibus circa cultum Dei et sanctorum, quod aliquae observationes hujusmodi sunt manifeste licitae immo et obligatoriae quas videlicet tradidit ecclesia. Aliquae penitus illicitae,... aliae autem sunt mediae... Rursus advertendum quod apud simplices, qui videntur bonae fidei et alios religiose viventes,... agendum est potius ad rectificationem actionum suarum et ad bonam interpretationem, juxta intentionem quam habere debent, quam damnentur vel arceantur deserere suas consuetu-

keep close watch on the devotions of their flocks, to see that they were not tainted with superstition. He advised those of the religious who turned to him for advice, to keep the spirit of their Rule and not exaggerate the importance of the letter (1). For him, the devotional life of the people was to center about the example of Christ and the Saints and draw its efficacy from the Sacraments. It is noteworthy too, that he was amongst those who advocated frequentation of the Sacrament of the Eucharist and promised that if people conformed in their lives to the requirements for the proper reception of the Sacrament they would soon become skilled in Mystical Theology (2). And this was at a time when many considered it sufficient if they met the requirements which the Church set down at the Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215. Fear lest they profane the Sacred Presence had much to do with the aloofness of the crowd. But, by dint of insistence on the Will of Christ in instituting the Sacrament and by the writing of tracts to stimulate the devotion of the priests and of the people, Gerson and some few others of his day succeeded in warming the devotion of the faithful towards the central Sacrament of the whole Christian dispensation, thus bringing into closer union the Head and the members of the Mystical Body. Perhaps the greatest fruit of this movement may be seen in the Fourth Book of the *Imitation of Christ*, the theme of which stresses the importance of the Eucharist as an aid in the cultivation of a devout life.

For Gerson, the most important human device to be used in

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dines. » III, 471-472, 475, 476 : « Satis suppetunt exempla pietatis, fidei et religionis christianae in sacris Scripturis et historiis authenticis sine multiplicatione hujusmodi superfluorum novorum, quae nec satis habent solidum fundamentum. » Cfr I, 206.

(1) III, 161-164 ; 476 ; 440-442. With certain congregations every infraction of the Rule constituted a grave evil. Most frequently exaggeration came from the monks themselves.

(2) III, 426 : « Per cujus tamen sacrae communionis frequentationem super omnia fit homo devotus, et habilis ad theologiam mysticam, si vitam et mores huic salutifero sacramento conformare non omittat prout alibi sub consideratione multiplici notatum est. » Cfr III, 841, the advice offered by Gerson to his sisters, as follows : « Mettez painne de vous confesser souvent, comme chascune semaine, ou chascune grand feste,... et recevez selon vostre devocion le vray pain divin qui nourrit l'ame. » Cfr III, 699.

the pursuit of perfection was the practice of meditation (1). Without it, he said on one occasion, there could not, humanly speaking, be any such thing as spiritual perfection. For anyone to attain to the height of perfection without first having passed by meditation, would be nothing short of the miraculous. But though the practice was of the highest import, he hesitated to write about it (2). If he did finally compose a tract it was with a view of indicating what difficulties encompassed those who strove to meditate (3). The purpose of the writing was simply to clear the ground. There was no attempt to set down a system. On the contrary, it was against Gerson's mentality that one should attempt to do so. Only in the Sixteenth Century was emphasis to be given to system in meditation.

Not that the advantages of systematic prayer were not appreciated before the time of Ignatius. But the determination to make resolution take rise from conviction, and the deliberate attempt to train arguments to conquer the reason is more characteristic of the Sixteenth Century than of the Middle Ages. The writings of Anselm, Bernard, Bonaventure and the Saint-Victors, to name only a few of the guides to the spiritual life, show well enough how important a role was attached to meditation. It was with them the chief act of the Illuminative Way (4). But we notice that with them, and more particularly in the writings of Balma and Thomas of Verceil, the object of the meditating was to seek out the mystic

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(1) III, 451 : « Dum enim recogito quod absque meditationis exercitio nullus, secluso miraculo Dei speciali, ad perfectionem contemplationis dirigitur aut pervenit, nullus ad rectissimam christianae religionis normam attingit. »

(2) *Ibid :* « Denique tanta reperitur difficultas, tanta pro diversitate hominum varietas in practicando doctrinam verae sanctaeque meditationis, quod an silere, an aliquid scribere consultius sit videor egomet mihi quandoque sub dubio hinc inde mente fluctuare. » Many years later, when Mombaer was drawing up his tract entitled *Meditatorium* for the composition of which he depended much on Gerson, he refers back to this passage to prove the difficulty that hampered those who essayed to compose a method of meditation. Cfr Watrigant, *Histoire de la méditation méthodique*, artic. in the *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, 1922, 1923, vols IV-V.

(3) III, 450, 453-454.

(4) Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol., III, pp. 13-20. Poulain, *Les grâces d'oraison*, 10th ed., p. 41, Paris, 1922.

signification of passages of the Scripture and reach an appreciation of the spiritual signification of all the material symbols that could be seen in nature and in religion (1). All was dominated not so much by the impulse to know as by the need of love. The speculative aspect had not yet fully declared itself. Despite the insistence on the value of symbols and the search to look behind the things of creation and read the intention of the Creator, meditation was used to express love and the purpose that is evident in the meditations of such Saints as Anselm and Bernard, — whose meditations we may still read to-day, — was increase of love. This was the value that Gerson also attached to the practice. To meditate was not so much to reflect, as to pray.

Though he insisted upon the necessity of meditating, he did not think to bind his followers to any one method which should dominate all beginnings of spirituality. He indicated the existence of what aids or models were in use in his day. To such as his sisters he pointed out the avantages of each system (2). But he did not deem it wise to dictate to them just what method they should follow. In fact, he thought that meditation should vary with « person, place, and season and according to the Grace of God and the knowledge of the one meditating. What pleases one is not always satisfactory to another, and what is fruitful one day may prove arid the day following (3). » For this reason he did no more than indicate the features of the methods of prayer that the Saints employed. Yet however elementary his instructions were, and we have already discussed them in a previous Chapter, they were to form a basis upon which such as Mombaer and Garcia de Cis-

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(1) Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. II, pp. 161, 174.

(2) III, 571-572. The system of Richard of Saint-Victor was fitted more for clerics than for uneducated people. Augustine, Gregory and Jerome were mentioned. Of Gregory, Gerson said that he was given more to the explanation of the difficulties of contemplation than to the manner of attaining to it. The methods of Bernard in his commentary on the *Canticle of Canticles* and John Tauler in his *Horologium aeternae sapientiae* were not to be recommended to beginners.

(3) III, 571 : « Et ergo non semper unus et idem modus meditandi tenetur, sed valde variatus secundum personarum, locorum atque temporum diversitatem, et secundum gratiam Dei, doctrinam et scientiam quam quis habet. »

neros were to build almost a century after his death when they were organizing what proved ultimately to be the Ignatian Method (1).

The definition of meditation employed by Gerson will serve to indicate the affective quality of the act. For him, meditation was « the vigorous effort of the heart to come upon new sources of piety » (2). The exercise did not therefore exist for itself alone, but was valuable only as a means to true prayer. For him meditation was to be made, not so much with a desire to know, as in a spirit to sound new depths of love. He took well to heart and followed the adage of St. Bonaventure that « true wisdom consists in knowing the more in order to love the more », and he showed how a spirit of gratitude and filial love was a surer avenue to true prayer than any ability to scrutinize the Attributes of God could be (3). Reason had, indeed, a share in the act of meditation for him. But whatever functions it exercised were to be useful only inasmuch as they discovered new causes for love. The intellect might be active in the search for the beautiful and the good but once it had attained to them it had to stand back and permit the affections to delight in contemplating them (4).

It is particularly when he talks of the manner in which simple people, — who could not certainly be expected to follow a system of mental prayer in which considerations drawn from reason were to play the dominant part, — that he proves how his own inclinations turned towards a method that should be prompted solely by love. To Gerson, meditation became the work of the affections chiefly. The name that would best suit his practice would be that of *affective prayer*.

To this, all the influence of the mysticism of Bonaventure, to which he was so susceptible, would lead him. To the same end he would be carried by his belief that the will was a

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(1) Watrigant, *o. c. Quelques promoteurs de la méditation méthodique au* XV^e^ *siècle* ; Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. III, p. 25, 33.

(2) III, 449 : « Est autem meditatio vehemens cordis applicatio ad aliquid investigandum et inveniendum fructuose. » Cfr III, 449-55 : *De meditatione* ; 457-467 : *De simplificatione, stabilitione seu mundificatione cordis.*

(3) III, 463.

(4) III, 461 ff.

nobler faculty than the intellect. But apart from these *a priori* considerations, we have clear indications of the affective value of his devotional practice in the many writings of his that bear the title of meditation (1). In hardly any of them does reflection play a part. All is dominated by the Love of God. This may be seen chiefly in his meditations on the Lord's Prayer, — meditations that take their impulse in the thought of the Fatherhood of God and which find their fruit in humble prayer. There is one place in particular where Gerson develops the theme of the Fatherhood of God as a powerful aid to piety. A person, — and it could be any one at all, — whose meditation was inspired by that thought would meet all the requirements for mental prayer. If anybody were to demand of such a one what method he followed, he could say : « I think of my heavenly Father, my Benefactor, my Redeemer and my Savior, my Friend and my Spouse.» Should the questioner ask further : « But who is this Father of yours ? What is his nature ? What perfections has he ? » the answer would be : « He is infinite and incomprehensible and therefore I do not try to know all about Him. Suffice it for me to know Him under the figures and the types that are given me in this place of exile (2). » Such meditation was what aroused all the affections of the heart. In this way was realized the real purpose of meditation which was to lead the soul to prayer. In the process reason could be used. Indeed the natural impulse was to raise one's self from the temporal and the material to the realm of the spiritual, but these in the final analysis were but aids and marked stages in the path to perfection. The ideal of all meditation was to attain to a stage when the soul depended no longer on material images and when it contemplated with love the perfections of the Godhead (3).

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(1) III, 505-511 ; 694 ; 697-699.

(2) III, 463 : « Satis est mihi ipsum pro statu praesentis exilii cognoscere sub eis quae commemoratae sunt rationibus, quia pater, quia pius, quia benefactor, amicus intimus, pulcher decorus et totus desiderabilis. » This theme is repeated in the *De monte Contemplationis*, III, 578.

(3) III, 462 : « Applicet meditantis cor simulitudines istas pro practica suae meditationis, confestim ut offertur aliquod corporeum oculis suae meditationis. Non quiescat in eis ; sed suspirando, desiderando, diligendo supervolare quaeret ad quoddam abstractum denudatum unum. Utatur corporalibus quasi quibusdam scalis ad tendendum ad spiritualia non quiescendo in scala. »

By the same token, the affective quality of meditation, as used by Gerson, was best suited to offset the various dangers and delusions that come to those who aspire after piety. It was the curious and the vain who fell a prey to the illusions and emotions of false mysticism. Those who waited on the Will of their Father and made it their aim to follow His Will, as it was made known to them by the voice of their director, were protected against the snares that lay in wait for such as would be their own guides. Those who did not look for visions and revelations to direct them, and who prayed, whether or not they were favored with sensible emotion, were, according to Gerson, on the right path to perfection. We have seen how he tried to exercise a check on the tendency of his time to take up with external devotions, and how his programme and his whole ambition for the reform was to be effected chiefly through the channels of the Sacraments and the ordinary means of sanctification in the Church (1). Similarly then with another excess, that of emotionalism. Gerson took great pains to lay down rules by which the devotional life of individuals could be tested, according to the touchstones of *humility*, *discretion*, *patience*, *truth* and *charity* (2). He was always afraid of the tricks that fancy could play on the emotions of such as thought themselves much further advanced in the spiritual life than they actually were, and he not alone afforded a well poised balance in which the ideas of would-

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(1) A typical example of this zeal in offering counsel to people of even the humblest conditions is to been in I, 48, where Gerson tells of an experience he had with a would-be mystic in the diocese of Arras, in the year 1397. This was a woman with a family, who to the great admiration of many of the townspeople undertook fasts of from two to four days in duration. Gerson found on investigation that the woman was not acting on the counsel of a director, that she had not been to confession in well over six months and that the fasts far from being an aid to spirituality were only the means of whetting an appetite that was indulged as soon as the fast was finished. Such abstinence, said Gerson, was not for sobriety, but was a sign of pride and obstinacy. « Non sobrietam esse hanc abstinentiam reperi, sed vanam superbamque pertinaciam. » He spent no little time trying to persuade the woman to abandon and the practice to do nothing of such a nature without the advice of a confessor.

(2) I, 56.

be mystics could be weighed, but he tried to check the curious zeal and the peculiar ambition of the individuals themselves.

It was for such reasons that he frowned upon all attempts to accentuate the intellectual side of mysticism and he made progress contingent upon well grounded humility. Thus, it would be a characteristic judgment with him that even though meditation was a great means to attain to perfection, obedience was a better one (1). True meditation was more of a prayer than an act of the reason. It was based on the three supernatural virtues of Faith, Hope and Love (2). It found its reason to be only as an aid to prayer (3). Once the soul responded to the Love of God there could be no further need for meditation ; for no one continues to blow on a fire that has kindled. He seeks rather to benefit by the heat and the light. The simile that best represents the transition from meditation to contemplation is that of the death of Rachel in the birth of Benjamin. Rachel was like meditation which had no longer reason to be once contemplation was born (4).

Though he stood often at the doors of contemplation, and though he was instrumental in leading many others to the same objective, Gerson makes hardly any attempt to describe the effects of extraordinary spiritual favor. There is in his teaching little of the analytic. Mention of personal experiences are rare. This was obviously because there was little in his life to permit such analysis and because the tenor of his devotional progress was quite even, unmarked by elevations, visions or revelations. But he felt also that he was unworthy to treat of so eminent a theme (5). He thought of himself as a guide and of his teaching as a means to prepare souls for spiritual favors which could come only from the Holy Spirit (6). People could dispose themselves. They could aspire to

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(1) III, 261.

(2) For this reason, meditation and prayer could be the better accomplished by those whose Faith was the more secure, III, 550, 547, 265.

(3) III, 451.

(4) This figure is, of course, that of the *Benjamin minor* of Richard of Saint-Victor.

(5) III, 579.

(6) II, 42 ; III, 1238, 1261 ; III, 7 : « Si non potest corpus mortuum vitales operationes exercere, quomodo dicet aliquis animam vita sua carentem, quae est Spiritus Sanctus, in opera vitae spiritualis exire posse ? »

become mystics. They could turn the full vigor of their effort to purge their souls of all that was in contradiction to their ambition, and they could pray. But the Grace had to come from above, from the Spirit Who breatheth where He will. Mysticism was not, for Gerson, a body of knowledge that could be acquired by patient study. Intellectual effort had little or nothing to do with it. It was to be acquired in the school of the affections and by the vigorous and painstaking practice of the virtues (1).

« Let no one think therefore », he wrote, « that any man can of himself hand down information as to the mystical union of the soul with God (2). » Contemplation could be had in a thousand ways (3). But the work of Gerson, as of all who spoke on Mystical Theology, was to picture the splendor and the beauty of the Divinity that men might be inspired to seek after It and love It, that they might be moved to correct their defects to the best of their ability, and that they might be led to trust in God and to pray (4). This was the object of his mysticism and the guarantee he gave that it constituted a safe teaching was that it blended with the word of the Scriptures and with the ideas of the great masters of the spiritual life (5).

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(1) III, 385 : « Mystica vero theologia sicut non versatur in tali cognitione literatoria sic non habet necessariam talem scholam, quae schola intellectus dici potest ; sed acquiritur per scholam affectus et per exercitium vehemens moralium virtutum, disponentes animam ad purgationem, et in theologicis illuminantibus eam, et in beatificis virtutibus eam perficientibus. »

(2) IV, 340 : « Nullus idcirco putet vel expectet quod ab hominibus de per se sibi tradi possit cognitio super unione mentis cum Deo. »

(3) III, 578.

(4) IV, 340 : « Est igitur commune studium omnium qui de theologia mystica, quae sistit in unione, locuti sunt, inducere ad tria quae requiruntur et sufficiunt. Videlicet, desiderium divini objecti, remotio impedimenti, imploratio divini beneplaciti. »

(5) IV, 341.

CHAPTER VI

SOURCES OF THE MYSTICAL TEACHING OF GERSON

One of the great values attaching to the mystical teaching of Gerson is that it offers us a cross-section of the spiritual theories of the Middle Ages. He, perhaps, better than any other man of his time, was acquainted with the thought of the mystics from the age of Denys down to the days of Ruysbroeck. His personal interest in the study and his zeal to advance along the way of perfection caused him to consult the writings of the great masters of the spiritual life (1). The consciousness of the responsibility that weighed upon him in directing the progress of his sisters and his brothers made him careful to secure for his advices to them the sanction of authority. Then too, as Chancellor of the University and official censor of all teaching, he was bound to become familiar with the history of spirituality, if for no other reason than to pass judgment upon the orthodoxy of the mystical ambitions and practices of his time. Like almost everybody else in the late Middle Ages he looked to Denys, the Pseudo-Areopagite, as the father of mystical teaching (2). Like many of his compeers, he had been affected by the ideas of the Augustinian bloc (3). But no more for his mysticism than for

(1) III, 426 : « Ego per quadraginta annos et amplius versavi et reversavi multa studendo, legendo, orando, meditando in otio temporis multo... » I, 116 ; IV, 726 ; Cfr artic. by Vernet in the *Dict. th. Cath.*, vol. VII, pp. 302-303.

(2) III, 365 : « Aliqua est theologia mystica ultra eam qui vel symbolica vel propria nominatur. Ita enim separate tractavit de ea sub proprio titulo beatus Dionysius a conscio divinorum secretorum Paulo doctus.. » Saudreau, *La vie d'union à Dieu*, p. 63.

(3) « Augustinism » does not, of course, mean that the philosophers of Gerson's day harked back as far as the Sixth Century for their principles. As Gerson himself declares, it was difficult enough to get them to respect anything that antedated Occam. But the Philosophy which, in Catholic

his Philosophy was he a blind follower of any man. He weighed and compared mystical teachings before he accepted them and, when he came to organize a system of his own, he incorporated into it elements that he had drawn from many sources, forming into a harmonious whole ideas that not infrequently were supposed to stand opposed to one another. His mysticism was, to be sure, little more than a mosaic, but it is admirably arranged and has upon it the mark of a master artist.

To recite the list of all the authors that are mentioned by Gerson as authorities for his teaching would be to enter into a tedious enumeration of names and titles (1). Suffice it to say that, when he organized his system which had, of course, to be pointed to meet the need of those he intended

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philosophical circles, comes under the head of Augustinism is that which was developed in the early part of the Thirteenth Century and which was to enter into opposition with the Aristotelianism of St. Thomas. In point of fact, not all of the doctrines of the Augustinians could be found in the writings of St. Augustine. Cfr De Wulf, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 319 ff.

(1) III, 434 : Here, Gerson enumerates those who speak on the contemplative life, and comments upon the value of their works. « Magnus Dionysius edoctus a Paulo, hanc theologiam speculative tradidisse in suo *de theologia mystica*, et in aliis libris suis saepius interserit. »

« Venerabilis Richardus quasi primus post eum materiam hanc ab aliis sub collaudatione vel admonitione traditam, reducit ad modum artis et doctrinae in suo *de arca mystica*. Cassianus in *collationibus Patrum* nominatim in *de charitate*. Augustinus in lib. *de vera religione* et *confessionibus* et *de Deum diligendo* et *de Trinitate*, ac alibi pluries. Climacus in suo libro *de triginta gradibus scalae*. Gregorius in suis *moralibus* sparsim, specialiter in sexto, et in tertia homilia *super Ezechielem*. Bernardus *super cantica* et *de diligendo Deum*, *ad fratres de monte Dei* et alibi. Hugo *de Arca Noë* et *de oratione* et *super ecclesiasten* praesertim in prologo et *super coelestem hierarchiam*, praecipue VII. capitulo et alibi. Bonaventura in suo *Itinerario*, totum miro et compendiosissimo artificio complexus est, et in suo *Stimulo amoris*. »

« Sunt alii tractatus compilati a novellis, ut *stimulus amoris ad Christi passionem*. Et alter liber *de triplici via*, cujus initium est *Viae Sion lugent*. Et alius *de novo saeculo*, et alter *de septem itineribus aeternitatis*. Et alter *de ornatu spiritualium nuptiarum*, cujus tertia pars suspecta est. Scripta sunt aliqua denique super hoc in vulgari, et in sermonibus quibusdam ad clerum, et parvulis tractatibus quae omnia dinumerare non nostrum est. » The last sentence refers, of course, to his own writings. In addition to these (III, 883) mentions also the *Horologium sapientiae aeternae* of Suso and the meditations of Augustine, Anselm and Bernard.

to advise, he followed the method any good teacher would use. He did not try so much to please as to convince. He did not talk about what he thought himself so much as he tried to show the foundation upon which his notions were based. Thus, the personal element was more or less neglected, except when he essayed to move the students with a resolution kindred to his own. On such occasions, he addressed their hearts more than their heads and gave vent to a rhetorical display that must have, perforce, carried them to the heights of his own enthusiasm. But for the greater part of his lectures emotion plays a very small role and we find him supporting his words with the names of Augustine, Gregory, John Climacus, Bede, Anselm, Bernard, Hugh and Richard of Saint-Victor, Bonaventure, William of Paris and St.Thomas of Aquin (1). The chief direction of his leaning was towards those who bore the influence of St. Augustine's ideas, and the writings of the Victorines and of Bonaventure formed what was to prove for him an inexhaustible well of inspiration. But for all that he delved in other fields, as the litany of names just recited would itself suggest. The sermons and meditations of Bernard and Anselm were used to shed the soft glow of affection over the rough outline of the mystical system of the Victorines (2) ; and the devotional aspect of Franciscan spirituality was balanced by the teachings of St. Thomas and Suso (3).

Just at the time that he began to teach, a reaction against the intellectual inertia of late Scholasticism was making itself felt. People were becoming heartsick for want of devotional calm. The bickerings of the scholars and the tendency to divide and distinguish, even when it was question of spiritual exercises, left the bulk of the faithful at a loss what to do. Fortunately, they were given some stimulus in the external devotions that they practiced, but there was danger lest they exaggerate

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(1) III, 369, 545, 571, 883, 1439 ; II, 670 ff., I, 41.

(2) I, CLXXV, 108 ; IV, 29, 723. The sermons of Gerson and his tract on the *Canticle* of *Canticles* bear many indications of his recourse to St. Bernard. His meditations, e. g. III, 505-540, have the same affective qualities that are characteristic of those of Anselm.

(3) I, 117, III, 434, 883.

even these and, like the Beghards and the Flagellants, make more of their private practices than they did of the ordinary channels of Grace in the Church (1). Men such as the Brethren of the Common Life began an attempt to effect a return to the affective system of devotion that they claimed was more in the spirit of the Church and which had, in fact, dominated the spiritual life in the period before the rise of the Universities (2). Others, and these were the scholars themselves, turned against any such project and would make knowledge the be all and end all both here and hereafter (3). But Gerson went to neither extreme. He obeyed his usual bent and attempted a compromise. With him, the two ways of approach to the Divine were made to blend into one system. And it was not expediency or the desire to fit the demands of opposing factions that made him do this, but a profound conviction that the truth of the matter stood so. We know that he was drawn to the affective side of mysticism ; we recall that for him St. Bonaventure was the « secure leader » and one that was at the same time learned and devout (4). But that did not make him liable to overlook the importance of the intellectual faculties or to neglect to fit his teaching to the whole man, — mind as well as heart. Thus we find him giving attention in his lectures to *speculative* as well as to *practical* mysticism.

Indisputably, the speculative aspect of the mystical teaching of Gerson bears the impress of the thought of the Victorines. With the customary freedom of a time that thought it no sin to plagiarize, he culled from the writings of Hugh and Richard of Saint-Victor not alone the ideas and definitions that he was to employ, but the very turns of expression and the figures of speech that they used to illustrate their doctrine (5). Not that

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(1) I, 55 : « Amplius hanc ob causam videntur errasse Begardi et Begardae ob indiscretam dilectionem nomine devotionis palliatam. » I, 455 ; II, 660.

(2) Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 381.

(3) III, 545 : « Cum ista materia (contemplatio) ad illiteratos simplicesque non pertineat. »

(4) I, 21 : « Porro si quaeratur a me, quis inter ceteros doctores plus videatur idoneus ? Respondeo sine prejudicio, quod dominus Bonaventura, quoniam in docendo solidus est et securus, pius, justus et devotus. » I, 117 ; IV, 337-338.

(5) The definitions for contemplation, meditation and thought (III, 378) were taken from the Victorines. — So too, the division of the soul into

he was unscrupulous about it. None was quicker than he to acknowledge his indebtedness, and we find repeatedly references to one or other tract of the two great Doctors of the monastery of Saint-Victor (1). His *Tract on Speculative Mysticism* bears the unmistakable marks of their influence upon his ideas.

We have no intention to declare here that the speculative aspect dominated the mysticism of the Victorines : nor, for that matter, do we feel bound to enter intimately into the study of their system. That would be to depart too far afield, and there is no reason why once we had traced the development of the ideas of one school of mysticism we should not do the same for all. But it does enter into the purpose of this work to show that the mystical teaching of Gerson was well sponsored, and that his was chiefly a work of adapting to his own time the sage counsels of those who in the Twelfth Century had to react against emotional excesses of the Cathari and the Albigenses. It was a plain case of applying the same remedy to correct an affliction that repeated itself. Like the Victorines, he was to oppose the attempt to substitute psychology for dogma. Like them, he was to uphold the principle of authority and to make clear upon what lines the path of true mysticism ran. Above all, he was not to be carried away by sentiment (2). It is not strange then that there is so much in common between the writings of Gerson and those of the Victorines. In them, he found ready to hand the principles that he needed to apply to secure a balance between the conflicting mysticisms of the Fourteenth Century. What is more, he had the assurance of the value of the teaching of Hugh and Richard in that it wore well with time. So it is no wonder that we find him swift to consult and to employ their ideas.

This influence of the Victorines over Gerson is marked for the most part by its speculative character. Like them, he was

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six faculties (III, 370), and the use of figures of burning-wood, mirrors, etc., were borrowed directly from Hugh and Richard. Saudreau, o. c., p. 154-168.

(1) I, 102, 108 ; III, 369, 378, 382, 418, 434, 566, etc.

(2) Pourrat, o. c., vol. II, pp. vii, ix.

to consider the different faculties of the soul and the functions that were to be attributed to each one, — although he, no more than they, admitted a distinction between the faculties and the soul itself (1). Like them, he could allow for the intellectual side of contemplation and did not make it rest solely in the affective faculty (2). When he tells how the ideal of prayer, as of mysticism, is that it be cut away from all sense suggestion and he based on a pure act of the intelligence he reflects their teaching. From their writings also he drew the distinction that he made between thought, meditation and contemplation, and the relationship that he declared to exist between them (3). His insistence on the value of experience in mystical life, his declaration that a good theologian was one who lived according to the truths that he professed, his assurance that the mystic was a true philosopher and a true scientist, — all these notions and many more he garnered from his readings of the mystical tracts of the Victorines. Much of this, together with the various definitions that he appropriated, concerns the speculative side of Mystical Theology. Many other ideas, calculated to aid in the cultivation of affective spirituality found their origin at the same source but, for the fire that was to animate his mystical teaching, Gerson was more indebted to other masters.

Prominent amongst these must be counted St. Bernard, whose ideas are repeated in really embarrassing number in the pages of Gerson's works. To be sure, his sermons afforded the model for much of the oratoric effort of the Chancellor (4) who found, fulfilled in them, most of the conditions set down by William of Paris in his *Rhetorica Divina* (5). At the end of his days

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(1) Cfr *Benjamin major* of Richard of Saint-Victor (Migne, *Patrologia latina*, vol. CXCVI, p. 63 ff.) with III, 370-382.

(2) Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. II, pp. 186, 420 ; cfr *Benjamin major*, Book IV, Chapter VI, and also the *Soliloquium de Arrha animae* of Hugh of Saint-Victor. (Migne, *Patrologia latina*, vol. CLXXVI, pp. 951-970).

(3) *Benjamin major*, Book V, Chapter II ; *De modo dicendi et meditandi*, of Hugh of Saint-Victor (Migne, *Patrologia latina*. Vol. CLXXVI, pp. 875-880; Gerson, *Opera*, III, 378).

(4) The sermons of Bernard were used as types by the orators of Gerson's time.

(5) From this work was drawn the list of qualities that Gerson exacted of those who had to preach to the people.

he was to be found trying to imitate the commentary on the *Canticle of Canticles* which Bernard had made (1). Gerson was undoubtedly attracted to the career of St. Bernard, inasmuch as Bernard was a great reformer and one who succeeded in bringing temporary calm amongst the rival factions of his day. As a mystic too he had a great following and there were many who found in his simple trust in God, in his deep humility and in his insistence on the practice of the moral virtues the true path to perfection. With St. Bernard, self-knowledge and purification played a great role (2). Much of his effort was spent in attempting to indicate the steps that had to be taken preparatory to the reception of the gift of mystical union of the Canticle. Humility became the basis of all asceticism. Self-love was the evil against which Bernard directed all the fire of his eloquence. But Gerson was living in an age when, according to his own saying, self-love was the cause of all the evil that abounded (3). He was living amongst men who needed to be disciplined just as Bernard had prescribed for those who lived two centuries previously. Nothing was more natural than that he should learn from Bernard how to meet the exigencies of the early Fifteenth Century.

It is quite noteworthy with what closeness Gerson may be said to have followed the teaching of the Abbot of Clairvaux. Even in his devotional life he found inspiration from the writings of Bernard. After the cult of the Life and Passion of Christ, the outstanding devotions of Gerson found their center in Our Lady, St. Joseph and the Angels. Each of these devotions was also characteristic in Bernard. But it is particularly with relation to the practical aspects of the mystical life that the influence is noticeable. The same emphasis on the need of a guide for those who aspire to progress in the religious life, the same accentuation of the need of balance and of the part that discretion must play in the spiritual exercises that are used, the same predominance given to affective over speculative mysticism, — all these are points of similarity that

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(1) IV, 27-82.
(2) Pourrat, o. c., II, 29, 52.
(3) III, 1382.

indicate a direct influence (1). The same may be said for the importance Gerson attached to the act of meditation. But here we find Bernard on common ground with the Victorines and cannot, in consequence, ascribe to one or the other the credit for influencing Gerson on that point. One thing is certain however, and that is that Gerson's practice of meditating approached nearer that used by Bernard. With both, the act is calculated to generate love more than knowledge (2).

This harmony of ideas may best be seen in a sermon which Gerson preached on the feast of St. Bernard at the convent of the Bernardines at Paris (3). To have been invited to preach such a sermon is ample indication that he was known to be a sincere admirer of the Saint ; and the sermon that he preached would rival the better known panegyric that we have from Bossuet. It was as an apostle of love that he presented Bernard to his auditory. With modest grace Gerson subdued his own personality and adopted not alone the style but the very expressions of Bernard. His sermon was really a masterful presentation of the ideas of the great Cistercian. It could only be the fruit of much consulting of the spirit of the man, and the moral that he drew for the monks was perhaps one that he had long meditated upon himself. It was that they follow the steps that Bernard took to perfect himself in the Divine Love (4). In the spirit of Dante who sees in Bernard a guide to highest joys of Paradise, Gerson points to him as the best inspiration for love. It was in this way that the speculative tendencies that he had from the Victorines were set off and in the teaching of the Chancellor the ideas of speculative and affective schools of the Twelfth Century met.

In similar wise, when dealing with the mystical writings of the Thirteenth Century, though he preferred Bonaventure and the whole Franciscan School, Gerson was familiar with

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(1) Pourrat, *o. c.*, pp. 59-94 ; Vacandard, *Vie de St. Bernard, abbé de Clairvaux*, vol. I, pp. 478 ff ; Vol. II, pp. 70-78.

(2) Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 55.

(3) III, 1417-1427 : *Sermo de sancto Bernardo.*

(4) III, 1425 : « Haec tanta dicta sunt, reverendi patres et viri doctissimi, de amore bono, faciente civitatem Dei in nobis, et hoc sub persona amorosi nostri devoti Bernardi, tum ad commonitionem nostram, tum ad sui praeconiam. » Cfr III, 326.

the doctrines of the *Summa* of St. Thomas and with certain writings of the Rhine School (1). In his mystical teaching we come across indications of influence on the part of Dominican as well as of Franciscan spirituality. As Thomas and Bonaventure were the Theologians upon whom he depended most, so with his expositions of Mystical Theology, he had frequent recourse to their ideas. He mentions Thomas as one of the great authorities on the spiritual life, listing his name with that of the Victorines and Augustine, and when he has to treat of the obligations of the religious life, it is chiefly to the great Dominican that he has recourse (2).

But Bonaventure was the chief authority. He was one who lived, like Francis, under the domination of a great love. His was the ideal of teaching all men to strive for union with God in this life. All that he did, and all that he wrote, was done with a view to encourage mystical longing in others. Like a *leitmotif* this determination persists and recurs, giving to all his writings a perfect harmony. With Bonaventure, the desire for the contemplative life was not only permissible but it was a « duty that imposed on all those who were not as yet elevated to the state of passive prayer » (3). Contemplation, for him, was centered, not in the faculty of the intellect but in the affections. Knowledge of God was to be had not by research or mental striving but by patient and humble love (4). The result of the keenest scrutiny on the part of the intellect would not amount to more than a learned ignorance. But the will that gives generously of its love carries all before it and conquers heights of mysticism that the most fertile imagination could never fancy to exist (5).

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(1) III, 434, 883 ; I, 108.

(2) II, 669-682, III, 437 ; cfr Denifle-Paquier, *o. c.*, vol. I, pp. 275-287.

(3) Bonaventure, *Opera omnia* (Quarrachi Edition), 1882-1902, Vol, II, *Commentarium in Quattuor Libros Sententiarum, Liber Secundus*, Distinctio XXIII, art. 2, quaestio 3, ad 6 : « Hunc modum cognoscendi arbitror cuilibet viro justo in via esse quaerendum; quod si Deus aliquid ultra faciet, hoc privilegium est speciale, non legis communis. »

(4) *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*, Chapter VII, nº 4 : « In hoc autem transitu, si sit perfectus, oportet quod relinquantur omnes intellectuales operationes, et apex affectus totus transferatur et transformetur in Deum. » *Collationes in Hexaëmeron, Collatio* II, nº 32.

(5) *Collatio in Hexaëmeron*, XX, nº 11 : « Ibi intellectus *caligat* quia non potest investigare, quia transcendit omnem potentiam investiga-

Such were the principles of the mystical teaching of the « Seraphic Doctor », as Gerson named Bonaventure (1). This teaching accentuated just the ideas that needed to be stressed for the men of the Fourteenth Century. It fitted the needs of the time of Gerson, when men had to be taught to hope anew, to strive again, and to have confidence in their own ability assisted, of course, by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. When men lost confidence in one another it was good that some one did not lose heart. At a time when men were forgetting even to hope, it was good that there was someone to uncover a vision of spiritual opportunity, and to point out a road to true happiness. At a time when the chagrin of seeing the lack of good will on the part of their superiors, ecclesiastical as well as temporal, was gnawing at the hearts of most of the people, it was good that some one saw fit to recall what was the ideal for which all were striving in reality. Gerson saw the value of this characteristic in the learning of Bonaventure and made it a great point to tell the students, the religious and the people that his was a doctrine that was eminently fitted for the time (2). In one place he says how ridiculous it would be for himself to try to gain fame by his own writings, as so many of his confreres at the University were doing. « I would think it a fine thing », said he, « and would esteem my life well

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tivam. Est ergo caligo inaccessibilis, quae tamen illuminat mentes quae perdiderunt investigationes curiosas. » Cfr *Itinerarium*, Chapter VII, nos 5-6. *Commentarium in librum Secundum Sententiarum*, Distinctio XXIII, art. 2, quaestio 3, ad 6 : « Concedo quod oculi aspectus in Deum figi potest, ita quod ad nihil aliud aspiciat ; attamen non *perspiciet* vel videbit ipsius lucis claritatem, immo potius elevat in caliginem et ad hanc cognitionem elevabitur per omnium ablationem sicut Dionysius dicit in libro de Mystica Theologia, et vocat istam cognitionem *doctam ignorantiam.* »

(1) I, 117 : « Sortitus est idcirco secundum laudem vitae pariter et doctrinae nomen, ipse Bonaventura ut autonomatice Doctor Seraphicus nominetur. » Cfr De Wulf, *o. c.*, vol. I., 346.

(2) I, 21 : « (Bonaventura) recedit a curiositate quantum potest non immiscens positiones extraneas vel doctrinas saeculares dialecticas aut physicas terminis theologicis obumbratis more multorum, sed dum studet illuminationi intellectus, totum refert ad pietatem et religiositatem affectus. Unde factum est ut ab indevotis scholasticis quorum proh dolor ! major est numerus, ipse minus exstiterit frequentatus cum tamen nulla sublimior, nulla divinior, nulla salubrior atque suavior pro theologicis sit doctrina. »

spent did I do nothing else but bring men to appreciate and to follow the lessons of Bonaventure » (1).

The mystical teaching of Bonaventure was one of courage. It was a mysticism of action. As Longpré says, in an article on the *Mysticism of St. Bonaventure,* the Franciscan School exalted the activity of the soul (2). This is to be noticed surely in the teaching of Bonaventure himself, whose doctrine may be synthesized in a phrase : « Whoever wishes to be perfect in the love of God must first exercise himself in the love of his neighbor, just as any one to be a good contemplative must first have schooled himself in the virtues » (3). He insisted upon the value of the virtues in the march towards perfection, and declared that the gift of true prayer succeeded immediately the faithful practice of ascetic exercises. There was, for him, no break in the progress from ascetic to mystic. The advance was gradual, and, if the demands of the Purgative Way were faithfully fulfilled, the favors of the Illuminative Way and of the Way of Union would follow « normally and ordinarily » (4). The call to be « perfect as also the Heavenly Father is perfect » was issued to all, and for Bonaventure there was no question but that the goal was accessible to all who ran to attain it.

This was a mysticism of hope. It carried with it a promise of true happiness for all. Contemplation was a Grace « offered to all » (5). The desire of contemplation was incumbent upon

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(1) I, 116.

(2) Longpré, O. F. M., *La théologie mystique de S. Bonaventure,* article in the *Archivium Franciscanum Historicum*, vol. XIV, 1921, p. 54 : « La spiritualité franciscaine par suite de ses rapports avec la philosophie voluntariste de l'École Séraphique exalte beaucoup l'activité de l'âme. »

(3) *Commentarium in Librum tertium sententiarum*, distinctio xxvii, art. 2, quaestio 4 : « Qui enim vult esse perfectus amator Dei, prius debet se exercere in amore proximi, sicut qui vult esse bonus contemplativus debet esse bonus activus sicut docet Gregorius. » Cfr. Longpré, *art. c.*, p. 54.

(4) Longpré, *art. c.*, p. 76 : « La vie mystique et l'oraison infuse succèdent donc aux exercices ascétiques, et cela immédiatement et sans intermédiaire... Cet épanouissement est le terme ordinaire et normal. Pour tendre à ces hauteurs de la vie spirituelle il n'est pas exigé de vocation spéciale. »

(5) *Itinerarium*, Chapter I, nº 8 : « Qui vult igitur in Deum ascendere necesse est ut vitata culpa deformata naturam, naturales potentias

all. To make his own and to teach to the people of his day these lessons of the Gospel of Trust became the ideal of Gerson, and he saw in the teachings of Bonaventure a panacea for the ills that afflicted the Church (1).

For the Seraphic Doctor the principles of the mystical life were none other than the gifts of the Holy Ghost, of Intelligence and Wisdom especially. The latter gift was the better of the two. It was the true knowledge : knowledge that answered the demands of the heart as well as of the reason. But in the stages by which one was to advance to true wisdom, human activity was to play a considerable part and love was to dominate all (2). Not that Bonaventure did not insist all along the line on the necessity of supernatural aid. Sanctifying Grace was the cause of the initial act of turning towards God. It had to permeate every action in the three Ways (3). It was the true basis of the spiritual life. But the constancy of the gift depended on the manner in which the recipient was to co-operate with it, and the intention of Bonaventure was to invite all to give token of their good faith by being constant in prayer. « Let none be of the opinion, » said he, « that meditation suffices without devotion, or that knowledge is good without charity » (4). No one was to receive the gift of contemplation without he did something to prove his worthiness ; and the chief means by which the favor was to be won was that of prayer. Prayer is then the condition for all advance to God. But the prayer that is the most powerful is the one that is actuated by a lively Faith and a strong love and that is not so much concerned with petition as with adoration.

Meditation is another exercise pre-eminent in the mysticism

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supradictas exerceat... » Cfr Longpré, *art. c.*, pp. 79-80 : « Par une conséquence nécessaire *la vie mystique est encore le chemin ordinaire de la perfection.* »

(1) I, 52, 118 ff.

(2) Longpré. *art. c.*, pp. 103-106.

(3) *Ibid.*, pp. 43, 103 ff.

(4) *Itinerarium*, Prologue, nº 4 : « Igitur ad gemitum orationis per Christum crucifixum, per cujus sanguinem purgamur a sordibus vitiorum, primum quidem lectorem invito, ne forte credat quod sibi sufficiat lectio sine unctione, speculatio sine devotione, investigatio sine admiratione, circumspectio sine exultatione, industria sine pietate, scientia sine charitate,.. »

of Bonaventure (1). But with him as with St. Francis there was no question of making meditation anything but a means of giving scope to the sentiments of love (2). The psychology underlying all the mystical teaching of the Franciscans is that of Augustinian Philosophy which assigns the primacy to the will over the intellect. All tended, with them, to the generation of love, and they crystallized the ideal of their Order in that same word : *Caritas*. So with Bonaventure. The fruit that he looked to obtain from the act of meditation was not an increase of knowledge, but new impulse for love. This may easily be seen in the book of meditations that he composed which is known by the name of *Soliloquium* (3). In it the intelligence plays a part, indeed, but the whole trend of the meditations is towards the development of the affective faculty.

Bonaventure came, like many of his day, under the influence of the Victorines. He arranged the various steps which had to be taken in the advance towards mystical contemplation according to the hierarchy of faculties of the soul. This is particularly noticeable in the *Itinerarium mentis ad Deum*, a short tract in which Bonaventure, yielding to the love for symbolism that was so near to the heart of the Middle Ages and which found so full expression in the mysticism of St. Francis, tells of the mirrors in which the Attributes and the Perfections of God might be admired (4). There was the mirror of the world wherein those who took the pains to use discreetly their faculties of sense and imagination could see the glories of God

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(1) *Itinerarium*, Chapter I, nº 8.

(2) Longpré, *art. c.*, p. 55 : « Cette méditation amoureuse a sa raison d'être dans tous les états de la vie intérieure. C'est en donnant la prééminence au sentiment affectif et en concédant aux âmes une grande liberté d'action sous les aspirations du Saint-Esprit que le Séraphique Docteur ne parle pas autrement que S. Francois d'Assise, Sainte-Thérèse et l'auteur de l'*Imitation*. »

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 59. Longpré claims that the *Soliloquium* was the answer to the need created in the suggestions of the *De triplici via* of Bonaventure as to how meditation should be practiced. The *Soliloquium* becomes then a model. « Cette hypothèse admise il ressort avec plus d'évidence quelle place la méditation occupe dans la doctrine spirituelle du Séraphique Docteur. »

(4) Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. II, 162, 174 ; Saudreau, *o. c.*, p. 187, gives a brief analysis of the *Itinerarium*, in which the mysticism of Bonaventure may be found in synthetic form.

reflected in His creation (1). There was the mirror of the soul in which those who were schooled in the practice of introspection and who had shut out the clamor of the outside world could contemplate God in the image that He left on the soul itself. This was to be the work of the reason and of the intelligence (2). But the same faculties, once they were freed from the weight of imagination and the demands of the senses, could learn to consider the Divine Being in Himself. This last, said Bonaventure, « is a mysticism which only those who have had experience know, which no one experiences unless he seeks after it, and which no one seeks out unless he is drawn by Grace » (3).

In each of the steps above indicated, but especially in the last named, Gerson follows that teaching of Bonaventure. We recall the sermon that he preached on the Blessed Trinity, as an instance of the importance which he attached to symbolism (4). There, he told his audience that they must learn to see the perfections of God mirrored in the things of creation. He reminds them that in their own souls they had a reminder of the Trinity, — in the division of the faculties and the action of one on another. The likeness is so close to the preaching of Bonaventure that we can only suppose that Gerson followed literally the expression of his master.

This is but one of the many points of similarity. Many others suggest themselves, and indicate the dependence of Gerson for much of his affective mysticism on the teaching of Bonaventure. It was with reason that he praised him.

There are points of difference which may also be noted. But they are of no great importance. Thus, when he spoke of *synderesis*, Bonaventure indicated the highest intellectual faculty, whereas Gerson used the term of the affective part of

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(1) *Itinerarium*, Chapter II : *De speculatione Dei in vestigiis suis in hoc sensibile mundo.* Cfr *Benjamin major* (Migne, *Patrologia latina*, vol. CXCVI, p. 70).

(2) *Itinerarium*, Chapter III : *De speculatione Dei per suam imaginem naturalibus potentiis insignitam.* Cfr *Benjamin major* (Migne, *Patrologia latina*, vol. CXCVI, pp. 89 ff.)

(3) *Itinerarium*, Chapter VII, nº 8. Cfr Saudreau, *o. c.*, p. 198.

(4) III, 1268, 1278 : *Sermo de Sancta Trinitate.*

the soul (1). For the division of the faculties, which appertains more to speculative than to affective mysticism, both were dependent on the Victorines. But if Gerson and Bonaventure felt that they had to build from dogma and take account of the psychology of humankind, that does not make the mysticism that they taught any the less devotional. If they distinguished three Theologies : the symbolic, the dogmatic and the mystic, there can be no doubt but that it was to the third that they gave their full adherence. Mystical Theology was the crown and the reward of the other two. They existed for it, for they but shadowed forth the reality that mystics came to know by experience. Likenesses such as these, both of ideal and of expression, afford ample enough indication of the close dependence of Gerson on the teaching of St. Bonaventure. To draw out comparisons further is needless.

There are, however, several lines of approach to prove an indirect influence of the thought of Bonaventure on the mysticism of the Chancellor. Amongst these must be listed certain writings that followed so closely the mind of Bonaventure that they were for long thought to be his. These are the tracts on *Mystical Theology* by Hugh of Balma, and the *Stimulus of Love* by James of Milan (2). Both works were many times consulted by Gerson and his references to them are quite numerous. Strangely enough, he classified both Hugh of Balma and James amongst the « modern » writers although they were, both of them, close to the time of Bonaventure (3).

Gerson's reaction to the tract by Hugh of Balma has already been instanced (4). But, though he discounted the over-emphasis that the author gave to affective mysticism, he was none the less impressed by the practical nature of the ideas contained in the *De mystica theologia*, or, as he was wont to style it, the *Viae Sion lugent* (5). The challenge which Hugh of Balma

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(1) Bonaventure spoke of *synderesis* as the highest part of intelligence ; Gerson used the term of pure affection.

(2) III. 434.

(3) *Ibid.* Gerson uses the term « moderni » of a class of writings in which both of the above tracts are listed.

(4) Cfr Part Two, Chapter V, p. 308 ff.

(5) III, 434. Saudreau, *o. c.*, pp. 200-202.

made to the intellectual pretensions of the scholars, and his persistent effort to recall them to the cult of true knowledge in mysticism could not but strike a responsive chord in the soul of the Chancellor. But as we have seen, Gerson did not pass to the extreme of excluding all act of the intellect from the field of mysticism.

The tract by James of Milan had a more immediate and lasting influence on him. He found in it the central idea for his teaching of the *Mountain of Contemplation* and the various illustrations that he summoned to picture the ascent to virtue. Many of the rules that Gerson employed for the ascent of the mountain of prayer were suggested to him by the reading of the *Stimulus of Love* (1). The amount of the impression that it made on him may be surmised from the fact that he gave it his highest recommendation when writing to his sisters and expressed his regret that it was not translated into French (2). At the Library of Valenciennes, may be found a manuscript that dates from the early part of the Fifteenth Century and which contains a selection of spiritual writings that can only reflect the spirit of the Chancellor. For, first, there comes his own tract on the *Mountain of Contemplation* ; then follows his meditation on *Spiritual Poverty*, which was patently suggested by the reading of the *De arrha animae* of Hugh of Saint-Victor. Along with these are two translations : that of the *De arrha animae*, and also that of the *De stimulo amoris* (3). It is highly probable that the translations are from the hand of Gerson himself and that we have in the manuscript one of the books of piety that he furnished for his sisters.

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(1) Cfr Saudreau, *o. c.*, pp. 199-200, gives a brief analysis of the teaching contained in the *Stimulus amoris*.

(2) III, 572 : « Et doctor quidam in libor suo *De stimulo amoris* intitulato, tractat... de Passione Domini... Utinam praefatus liber esset in Gallicum translatus. »

(3) *Catalogue générale des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques de France*, vol. XXV (Poitiers et Valenciennes) p. 294, nº 239, fol. I : « Cy commence le livre de la vie contemplative; fol. 22 : Chi commence li secres parlemens de l'omme contemplatif ; fol. 53 : Cy commenchent les meditations Hugues de Saint-Victor appellés les *Erres de l'ame*; fol. 99 : *L'aiguillon d'amour*... traduction du *Stimulus amoris* par Jean Gerson. »

Suso was another mystical writer with whose teaching Gerson was more or less familiar. In the late Fourteenth and early Fifteenth Centuries one of the tracts of the German mystic had won considerable popularity. This was the *Horologium aeternae sapientiae.* (1) Gerson was familiar with the tract as early as 1397 (2). It is possible that he was introduced to the writings of Suso just at this time, when he was becoming acquainted with Flemish thought as well. At all events, he judged the work with the same scrupulous care that he used in the examination of the tract on *Mystical Marriage* of Ruysbroeck and, though he did not condemn it, was very hesitant about the effect it would have. Certainly, he claimed, it was not a tract to be placed in the hands of any one at all, because it dwelt, like the letter *Ad fratres de Monte Dei*, and for that matter many of the commentaries on the *Canticle of Canticles*, on a theme that was sensual. There was always danger with those who had not been well disciplined that their thoughts would wander from the spiritual to the carnal signification and their meditating become a source of worry instead of edification. For those who had well advanced along the path of mysticism Gerson did not question the licitness nor the advantages resultant from the use of the method employed by Suso or the author of the *Ad fratres de Monte Dei*, still he urged that even religious be careful about their use of the method (3).

With the writing of Hubertinus of Casala entitled : *The Tree of Life*, we find him less minded to be lenient. The reputation of the whole spiritual movement to which Hubertinus belonged, and his relationship with the ideals of Joachim of Flora were, in themselves, sufficient to sour Gerson against him (4). The violence of the attack of Hubertinus against those who did not practice evangelic poverty made the approval of the Chancellor less easy to acquire. The work was « extremely dangerous », said he, and anyone who read it

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(1) Saudreau, o. c., p. 219, note 1.

(2) He mentions the system employed by Suso, when he writes for his sisters the tract on the *Mountain of Contemplation.*

(3) II, 709, 718.

(4) I, 114.

without reason or who did not keep alert to the errors that were hidden between the lines, would be in proximate danger of falling into heresy (1). Other authorities who came after Gerson's day did not judge so harshly of the work. But Denys the Carthusian, while he did not condemn the work, had little esteem for it (2).

Other mystical writings which Gerson used in organizing his own teaching are the *De rhetorica divina* of William of Auvergne, the *De septem itineribus aeternitatis* by Rudolph of Bibroch and the *De novo saeculo* (3). He was familiar also with the preaching and teaching of Alain of Lille and of Raymond Lull (4). For the latter he was, with the Doctors of the Sorbonne, inclined to express suspicions (5). But, for all that, he acknowledged that many of the doctrines of Lull were correct.

Indications of a direct influence on the thought of the Chancellor by any of the writers last named are to be found only with great difficulty and are of such nature that importance cannot be attached to them (6). They are but a few of the men with whose opinions the Chancellor had become acquainted. Were we to indicate all, we would have a series of names that extended over all the centuries and included many pagan as well as Christian writers. We are not concerned here with the breadth of the early « Christian » Renaissance, but with the influences brought to bear on the mystical development of Gerson. Most of the elements that made part of his system have been traced. From the sources alone of his mysticism one might readily form an appreciation of its orthodoxy. A system

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(1) *Ibid.* : « Suffecerit igitur ad praesens commonuisse lectorem praedicti Hubertini sicut et aliorum extranea tradentium sub specie subtilitatis vel excellentis traditionis, quod omnia regulet et examinet juxta veritatem evangelicam et doctores communiter approbatos ; alioquin noverit se periculis maximis errorum et haeresum proximum fore. »

(2) Callaey, *o. c.*, pp. 136-137.

(3) III, 434. Cfr above, p. 331, note 1.

(4) III, 1593 ; I, 82, 114.

(5) I, 13 : « Ponitur ad praesens exemplum de doctrina Raymundi Lullii, quae quidem et vera et copiosa multa continet, non tamen in multis absque ponibili calumnia, de quibus nihil ad praesens. »

(6) We except William of Paris, whose tract was much used by Gerson, III, 573, 574; I, 108 : « Qui miro gratoque opificio speculativam cum suis moralibus absque confusione permiscuit. »

that is based on the doctrines of so many recognized authorities may not be said to bear the mark of heterodoxy or to give ground for suspicions.

There was not, as a matter of fact, any great originality in the mysticism of Gerson. Yet it was oftentimes preferred by those who came after him to the systems that had the explicit approbation of the Church in the canonization of their founders. And this is not so strange either. It is the proof that Gerson had admirably succeeded in adapting the mysticism of his predecessors to the needs of his time. There was in his teaching an equilibrium that was admirable and an adaptability that captivated. Since he made no effort to fit all characters into the same mould and to foist upon divergent natures exercises that had met with successful application in a few instances, his mysticism was the more welcome. Men took from their contact with his ideas a pleasant sense of freedom and a confidence in their ability to do good. What little of his personality entered into his tracts was fortunate too, since it was nothing else than his abiding love for his fellow-man and his deep devotion to the interests of religion. The best commentary one could make on his doctrine would be that it constituted a tradition for sober, discreet mysticism, moderate asceticism and resolute love. These are marks that cannot be depreciated. They made the charm of his teaching in his own day ; they are the guarantees that make friends for him in every generation.

But though the mysticism itself be well grounded on tradition, there are not wanting those who stand aloof and fear to come into contact with the spiritual ideas of Gerson. Some judge him too much in the light of the present day and blame him for his Gallican following. Others cannot forgive him because for a long time the *Imitation of Christ* was attributed to him. Still others, and these last with, perhaps, more reason on their side, feel that a man who was educated in the system of William of Occam, could not have anything good about him. Occamists held as a principle that no act was morally bad in itself, — not even to hate God, — and that morality comes not from the nature of things but from the express Will of God Who decides arbitrarily that He is pleased with

one form of conduct and displeased with another (1). This principle Gerson is said not alone to have accepted but to have carried to an extreme. The basis for all the morality that he taught became, thus, one that was « false in itself, dangerous in its effects, ruining all certitude and furnishing an excuse for all the criminal follies of fanaticism » (2). He is said to have taught that « not even assassination would be a crime if God had not forbidden it » (3). His name is linked with that of d'Ailly, whom Salembier shows to have been quite set in his Nominalistic convictions (4). Of what value could be the mystical teaching of such a man ?

But from what we have seen of Gerson, this judgment would seem at first sight a little too harsh. It is a fact that though his education was had in the system of the Nominalists, Gerson was not completely won over to their ideas. A few points of contrast will suffice to show that. For the Occamist there was no possibility for an accord between Reason and Faith. The existence of God and His Attributes, the freedom and immortality of the soul were matters of Faith only. It was thus a Philosophy of uncertainty as regarded matters of religion (5). But Gerson held that the Reason could attain to a knowledge of God, that it could come to a knowledge of the Attributes of God. He accepted the arguments from Reason

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(1) De Wulf, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 172 ; Gilson, *o. c.*, p. 266.

(2) Jourdain, in an article on Gerson in the *Dictionnaire des Sciences Philosophiques*, p. 618, writes as follows : « Gerson pousse jusqu'à ses dernières limites ce système de morale, fondé sur le décret arbitraire de la Divinité, qui avait déjà été développé par Duns Scot et Occam, mais que S. Thomas avait énergiquement repoussé : système faux en lui-même, deplorable par ses résultats, qui n'exalte la puissance de Dieu qu'aux dépens de sa Sagesse et de sa bonté, ébranle toute certitude et fournit une excuse aux criminelles folies du fanatisme. Hâtons nous de dire que si la théorie de Gerson sur les principes de la morale est erronée, ses ouvrages sont du moins remplis d'excellentes observations en détail, et de maximes de conduite qui ne sauraient être trop méditées. » Cfr *La vie spirituelle*, vol. V (1922), p. 310.

(3) Garrigou-Lagrange, *La perfection chrétienne et contemplation*, p. 693. Cfr also pp. 599-600.

(4) Salembier, *Petrus de Alliaco*, p. 224, Lille, 1886.

(5) Christiani, article entitled : *Causes religieuses, politiques et sociales de la réforme protestante*, in the *Dict. Ap. de la Foi Cath.*, vol. IV, p. 584.

for the freedom and immortality of the soul (1). Those who have studied his Philosophy have remarked that his adherence to Occamism was limited (2), and have pointed out instances where he differed much from d'Ailly (3). In point of comparison the citations made from St. Thomas would outnumber several times those that are made from Occam whom, indeed, Gerson recognizes as « subtle » but whose say-so is not always accepted (4). It would seem strange also, for a full fledged Nominalist to display an interest in the works of the « antiqui » as Gerson did (5). It must have provoked some of his narrow-minded confreres that he made friends with the Dominicans at Paris and insisted upon their recall to a place in University-life (6). Strange too, that his favorites were Bonaventure, Hugh and Richard of Saint-Victor and William of Paris (7). But what is most difficult to harmonize with his Occamism is that he was the first to criticise its evil effects at the University and to demand a reform (8). How can the return of Realism to a position of honor at Paris be reconciled with a rigid Nominalism in the Chancellor of the institution (9) ? How explain all his insistence that the students hark back to the Thirteenth Century for their authorities (10) ? Much easier would it be to put a natural interpretation on all these actions and decide that whatever Nominalistic leaning he had, it was certainly not extreme and was well

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(1) Cfr I, 25, 91, 100-103, 114, III, 1271-1272, 1280-1282.

(2) K. Werner, *Die Scholastik des späteren Mittelalters*, vol. IV, p. 98 ff., Vienna, 1887; Ehrle, *Die Sentenzenkommentar Peters von Candia*, pp. 92, 109 ff.; De Wulf, o. c., vol. II, p. 188.

(3) Werner, o. c., vol. IV, pp. 104-105.

(4) III, 14 ; II, 305.

(5) I, 17, 104-105 ; 107-108 ; IV, 337-338.

(6) I, 112 : « Sed numquid qui ceciderunt non adjiciant ut resurgant ? quinetiam pia mater universitas haec quae hactenus filiis irata est, numquid tandem misericordiae recordabitur, aut continebit in ira sua misericordias suas ? » Cfr II, 436 : « Diu ostendi me non odio habere Mendicantes, aut eorum voluisse destructionem ut apparet in reconciliatione fratrum praedicatorum. »

(7) Werner, o. c., vol. IV, p. 100.

(8) I, 94-109, 120-124; Ehrle, o. c., pp. 92, 109 ff, 345 ff. Cfr above, Part One, Chapter V, pp. 81 ff.

(9) Ehrle, o. c., p. 154.

(10) I, 107-108.

tempered with Realistic doctrine with which he strove to make an accord.

But no matter what be the strength of *a priori* reasoning it has, none the less, to be harmonized with facts. We are confronted with two quotations from the works of Gerson to bear out the accusation of his acquiescence in the Nominalistic thesis regarding good and evil (1). One of these texts, and the more important one, dates from 1395, when Gerson was fresh from the Schools (2). The other one, from which we can judge the more fairly is to be found in the tract on the *Consolation of Theology*, written when Gerson was in his prime, in 1418 (3). In the first passage there can be no doubt of the Occamistic trend of thought. But it is to be recalled that the writing was made for d'Ailly who was confirmed in this Nominalism (4), that it was the work of a tyro anxious to please his master, whose favors are faithfully recounted (5). It must be remarked that the phrases : *it is probable, it is not clear to me, I will say neither yes nor no*, do not spell strong conviction (6). But the teaching is there

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(1) Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 401 ; Garrigou-Lagrange, *o. c.*, pp. 600, 693.

(2) III, 13.

(3) I, 147.

(4) The prologue says in part : « Postulare dignata est benevolentia tua, praeceptor inclyte, quatenus scripto tibi traderem unam ex lectionibus meis. » III, 1-2. De Wulf, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 188 : « P. d'Ailly est un occamiste de toutes pièces. »

(5) III, 3-4 : « Et certe tu Pater me misisti, quia me per te Licentiatum in sacrae Theologiae facultate fecisti ; tu per te et sub te magistralibus me insigniis decorasti ; te insuper motore in cancellariatus officium tibi successi... Sequentes itaque lectiones ejusdem materiae mittendas decrevi, non ad te docendum,... sed vel ad obedienter complacendum, vel ad praestandum gustum aliquem veteris otii onerosis curis tuis, vel quod modestius est ad corrigendum perficiendumque imperfectum meum quod viderunt oculi tui. » Yet for all his desire to please, Gerson shows, in the passage referred to as Occamistic, a much more moderate view than d'Ailly ever had.

(6) III, 13 : « Probabile est nullum actum creaturae de per se et intrinsece esse bonum bonitate moris aut meriti, aut similiter malum, nisi per respectum ad divinam rationem et voluntatem ; quia videlicet divina voluntas et ratio dignificat hominem pro tali actu, et pro alio indignificat, immo dicimus quod sine actu quocumque posset dignificare creaturam : utrum vero eam posset similiter absque quacumque actione aut omissione, aut pro quocunque actu cujuscumque generis indigni-

none the less, however mitigated these phrases may seem to make it. Occamism had left an impression upon his thought surely at this date, though the impression was not as deep as d'Ailly would have had it.

But as the years go by, we meet with certain actions in the Chancellor that cannot be harmonized with such teaching and we appreciate that he was a man who was not subservient to any system, much less that of Occam (1). It is difficult to reconcile with the idea that no action was evil in itself the statement that Gerson made in 1415 when he was refuting the doctrine of Tyrannicide (2). According to the Occamistic viewpoint, assassination could be permitted and be licit if God so willed. But Gerson says, speaking against those who defended the action of John Petit and the doctrine of Tyrannicide : « If an angel came from heaven to assure me that the action was good, I would declare him anathema. More, if I had direct assurance from God Himself I would not believe, because such a supposition is impossible (3). » No one could say that Gerson was a convinced Occamist, judging from such a statement. It certainly indicates a belief that Tyrannicide was evil by its very nature. Other quotations may be had to the same effect, as when Gerson says that the natural impulse of man towards God is so strong that he aspires after Him even though he be sent down to hell (4).

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ficare, non ita est mihi perspicuum; quamvis si attendatur dominantissima Dei virtus respectu suae creaturae qualitercumque se habentis in agendo vel omittendo, non videtur usquequaque evidens esse quod hoc non posset,... Si autem attenditur Dei sapientia et bonitas, istud dicere non videtur congruum. Ideo nihil hic pono nec assero, magis tamen inclinor assentire secundo quam primo et causa patebit in dicendis in materia de obligatione. Et juxta hoc consequenter habetur facilis manuductio ad videndum quomodo nihil est malum nisi quia prohibitum, et nihil bonum nisi quia Deo acceptum, et Deus non ideo actus nostros vult vel approbat quia boni sunt, sed ideo boni sunt quia approbat... »

(1) Werner, *o. c.*, vol. IV, p. 99 : « Gerson auf dem Gebiete der Scholastichen Theologie, keiner exclusive Richtung huldigte. » I 97.

(2) It is noteworthy that Gerson prepared himself for this whole struggle from the writings of St. Thomas. His works and those of Bonaventure were all the authorities that Gerson consulted while at the Council of Constance. Cfr II, 333-344 ; II, 353 : « Vidi nuper sanctum Thomam et Bonaventuram ; hic reliquorum libros non habeo. »

(3) V, 379 , Denifle-Chatelain, *o. c.*, vol. IV, pp. 295-296 ; *Chronique de Monstrelet*, ed. by Douet-d'Arcq, III, p. 55.

(4) III, 453.

We may say then that, by the year 1415, Gerson had mitigated whatever conviction had been his, in 1395, as to the Occamistic accounting for morality. But then, there is the tract written in 1418, on the *Consolation of Theology* (1). Does not that mark a relapse ? No, for the theory that Gerson develops in the tract referred to has to do with Theology, and the whole point of view is Theological. The context of the passage makes it clear that St. Thomas would not have differed from him. Gerson is replying to those Philosophers who declared that creation from nothing was impossible. He argues from Scripture and tradition to adduce that God does not wish things to happen because they are good, as if, like human beings, His Will were to be determined by things outside Himself (2). Rather, things are good because He wishes them to be such, so that if He wished them to be other than they are they would still be good. A reflection of this same passage is to be found in St. Thomas when he writes that this is the best world, not because it is the best possible, but because God so made it (3). Or better still, there is a great similarity between the words of Gerson and the celebrated quotation from Augustine that « things are because God knows them ; God does not know them because they are. »

The second quotation has then nothing to detract from our declaration that Gerson was not bound down entirely to Occamism and that he did not always accept the explanation as to the norm of morality which the Nominalists gave. If he seemed to yield for a time, it was in his early days and even then he risked offending his former master for whom he wrote, by declaring uncertainty on a point that d'Ailly must have taught with conviction, if we can believe Salembier.

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(1) I, 147.

(2) *Ibid.* : « Deus quippe non ideo vult res ad extra fieri, quia bonae sunt, quemadmodum movetur humana voluntas ex objectione boni veri vel apparentis ; est e contra potius quod ideo res ad extra bonae sunt, quia Deus vult eas tales esse adeo quod si velit eas non esse vel aliter esse, id quoque jam bonum esset. Propterea bene annuntiavit magnus Ambrosius post Basilium quod voluntas divina, naturae prima lex est. »

(3) *Summa Theologia*, Ia Pars, quaestio XXV, artic. 6, ad 3 : « Universum, suppositis istis rebus, non potest esse melius propter decentissimum ordinem his rebus attributum a Deo, in quo bonum universi consistit. » Cfr also *Comment. I. Sent.* distinctio XLIV, quaestio 1, art. 1-2.

As Gerson advanced, his point of view became more and more Theological. As a philosopher he is of worth indeed, and any who approach the study of his tracts with a view of forming an appreciation of the ideas that predominated in the years of the decline of Scholasticism will find their effort well rewarded. But the chief value of the Chancellor is as a Theologian and as a mystic. As such he stood head and shoulders over the men of his day, and built for himself a reputation that has ever since challenged the attention of Theologians and mystics. This Theology and this mysticism was, as we have seen, founded on Realism rather than on Nominalism, and the authorities upon whom Gerson depended for his doctrines were the Doctors whom the Church has ever recognized to be orthodox.

CHAPTER VII

ORTHODOXY AND INFLUENCE OF GERSON

As the Fifteenth Century drew to a close, the star of Gerson's fame was mounting to its zenith. His name had, as Vincent of Aggsbach declared, gone abroad into all lands and was associated with the names of the great men of all time. Strange as it may seem, it was not so much for his reforms as for his mysticism that he was renowned. It is true that those who had any ambition to work for the correction of the evils that still harassed the Church were sure to take some inspiration from the theories of the Chancellor and to bolster up their arguments with the strength of his reputation for honesty and orthodoxy. But the demand that made the scribes of the monasteries zealous to multiply his writings came from monks who had tasted the nourishing quality and the stimulating flavor of his doctrine and who looked upon him as a true friend and a sure guide. Only this can account for the fact that practically all of the early printing establishments took upon themselves to print the tracts of Gerson that had an ascetical or a mystical worth. Almost invariably, those who strove after perfection took counsel from him, and few were the monasteries where his writings did not stand side by side with the works of Augustine, Bernard, Thomas and Bonaventure, on the shelves of the library.

This veneration with which the monks held Gerson was, of course, quite marked even during his lifetime. He had been intimate with members of all the great congregations, and, as we have seen, had been instrumental in directing their spiritual progress. Those who followed his advices walked with a sense of security and found, for their needs, remedies that would be effective against what spiritual maladies might afflict them. The mysticism of Gerson was one of action; but there had been set down definite limits to restrain the ambitions of any too vigorous self-confidence. On the other hand,

those who began to despair of their own abilities, and who felt that they could do nothing of themselves found new courage when they took their troubles to him. Gerson was looked upon as the best guide in the matter of scruples of conscience (1), and many were the monks who profited by his guidance. Due to the sympathy of ideal that bound all Religious Orders together, the tracts of Gerson soon became common property and what he wrote for the edification of one convent or community was copied and sent about to other houses. This was the mode for the propagation of knowledge most characteristic of the days before the postal system was established, and while it demanded considerably more time it was none the less efficacious. The cult of the spirit of the Chancellor that was observed in most monasteries at the end of the Fifteenth Century offers ample enough indication of this, and proves the practical worth of his teaching. Bishops too, such as Gerard Machet, were keen to have copies of the tracts that had a spiritual value, and Thomas of Gerson, nephew of the Chancellor, grouped together many of the works that are now to be found in the Library of Tours (2).

Drawn by the prestige that clung to the name of Gerson, Luther approached him in an hour of need, and found, by his own declaration, great solace (3). Later in life he was to refer to him as his great comforter, and declare that « he more than any other had the gift of calming consciences » (4). It was to those writings of the Chancellor that were calculated to counteract abnormal spiritual conditions that the reformer of the

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(1) Cfr the lists of *incunabulae* in Hain, Copinger, Graesse and Pellechet. All show the important part which the spiritual writings of the Chancellor must have played.

(2) *Catalogue générale des manuscrits dans les bibliothèques publiques de France.* Vol XXXVII (Tours), pp. 296-297.

(3) Strohl, *L'évolution religieuse de Luther jusqu'en 1515*, p. 108. Paris, 1922 ; Scheel, O., *Martin Luther. Vom Katholizismus zur Reformation*, vol. II, pp. 127, 373. Tubingen, 1917 ; Müller, A. V., *Luthers theologische Quellen, seine Verteidigung gegen Denifle und Grisar*. Giessen, 1912 ; Id., *Luthers Werdegang bis zum Turmerlebnis, neu untersucht*. Gotha, 1920 ; Paquier, J., *Luther*, article in the *Dict. th. Cath.*, vol. IX, pp. 1170, 1196 ff.

(4) Scheel, o. c., p. 373 : « solus Gerson valet ad mitigandas conscientias. »

Sixteenth Century betook himself, and it was principally from these works that he drew his opinions (1). He esteemed Gerson to be of greater help than such Saints as Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, Bernard or Thomas of Aquin, because he, more than they, paid heed to temptations that were of a spiritual nature. For this reason, Gerson had been the means of saving many souls from despair, and that, said Luther, « was the reason why the Pope condemned him » (2).

Because of the dependence of the Protestant reformer on the sober judgment of the Chancellor many who have taken interest in the study of Luther's psychological evolution are minded to assign to Gerson an important place in this development. Some see in his teaching a proximate cause for the revolt that took place a century after his death and say that much of the doctrine of Luther was suggested to him by Gerson. Of course, it has to be admitted that Gerson stayed well within the limits of traditional orthodoxy and clung to the idea of authority in the Church (3). But this is declared to be his great weakness and it is claimed that the reason why his reformatory activity did not make a deeper impression on his own time was precisely because he was unwilling to attack ecclesiastical organization and doctrine (4). Between the characters and the teachings of the two are many striking resemblances. These also are insisted upon, and there are some who would go so far as to say that Gerson's teaching

(1) According to Paquier, Luther consulted the following works of the Chancellor : *De pollutione nocturna. De pollutione diurna. De consolatione theologiae. De vita spirituali animae. De remediis contra pusillanimitatem, scrupulositatem, deceptiones inimici, consolationes et subtiles ejus tentationes.* Cfr Paquier, *artic. c., Dict. th. Cath.*, vol. IX, p. 1198.

(2) Strohl, *o. c.*, pp. 87-88, quotes from the *Tischreden* of Luther, as follows : « Lui seul (Gerson) est capable d'apaiser les consciences car il dit : il ne faut pas faire de tout un péché mortel... En réduisant ainsi les exigences de la Loi, il a préservé beaucoup d'âmes du désespoir. Voilà pourquoi le pape l'a condamné. »

(3) Much of his activity for peace was prompted by his fear that the schism would be an occasion for heresy in the Church. Dufourcq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, p. 204. His activity in defense of doctrine and practice won him the title of « Most Christian Doctor ». Cfr I, 82, 114 ; II, 660 ff.

(4) Cfr Hauck, *o. c.*, vol. V, p. 1021 : « nicht ein Neubau aber eine Zuruckführung »; Bonnechose, *o. c.*, p. 312 : « Comme réformateur du clergé il échoua parce qu'il voulu réformer l'Église par l'Église même. »

was a response to a crisis similar to the one that harassed Luther so that certain of the doctrines that make an integral part of Protestantism were suggested to the Sixteenth Century reformer by none other than his predecessor, the Chancellor of Paris.

With reference to the characters of the two reformers there are, it is true, certain grounds of comparison if we accept the Protestant interpretation of the moral crisis in Luther's life. But there are also great differences. Both seem to have been disturbed by crises of scruples early in life (1). Both seem to have been dominated by a deep-seated desire to gain assurance of their ultimate salvation. This last could be attributed to the Nominalistic trend of their education and to the confidence which they learned to place in their own powers (2). But Gerson succeeded in laying the ghosts of his misapprehensions and satisfied himself with the assurance that if he did his level best to co-operate with the Grace that was given him, there could be no reason for worry. This Luther could not do, and wore himself out trying to conquer his weaknesses. Where Gerson found solace in the aids which the Church placed at his disposition, Luther did not. Where the former succeeded in harmonizing the role which the human will must play with the action of Grace, the latter first exaggerated the importance of nature and then rejected it altogether (3). The mysticism of Gerson was one of activity. That of the Protestant reformer was quite similar to the quietism of the Beghards, and this Gerson never tired of combating (4). Gerson held that no man

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(1) Indication of Gerson's crisis are to be found in IV, 727-729, when he tried to resign his position as Chancellor, and in III, 323, when he tells of scruples of conscience *post nocturnam pollutionem*.

(2) Denifle-Paquier, *o. c.*, vol. III, pp. 201-220; Strohl, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 86 ff.; Paquier, in the *Dict. th. Cath.*, vol. IX, p. 1257, says that the only thing that Luther drew from Gerson was his Nominalism. But it is doubtful that he even drew this. For it was d'Ailly and not Gerson that was studied by Luther as philosopher. The acquaintance of the Sixteenth Century reformer with Gerson was limited chiefly to writings which had to do with difficulties of conscience. Cfr above, p. 356, note 3.

(3) Cristiani, *Luther, sa vie, son œuvre, son caractère*, article in the *Dict. ap. de la Foi Cath.*, vol. IV, pp. 594-597.

(4) In the person of the Beghards, Gerson attacks many ideas which later became points of belief or practice with Luther. Thus : I, 459 :

would be damned without it be through his own fault (1). Luther so interpreted the dogma of Original Sin as to permit to man no ability to do anything but evil, and referred the question of responsibility for sin and salvation back to Will of God. The Chancellor held that all doctrine was sacred and though he stood for the Bible as the principal source of Faith, he would not have it placed indiscriminately in the hands of the people (2). Luther did not hesistate to adapt doctrines to meet his own views and was quick to eliminate from the canon of the Scriptures those writings that seemed to be in contradiction with his views on the inefficacy of good works. It is striking that Gerson was forced into a life of activity at a time when he sought solitude and quiet and that he retired as often and as soon as he could to the calm of the monastery. In contrast to this, the Sixteenth Century reformer began his career with all the facilities for spiritual progress close at hand, but cut away from it all and cast himself into a sea of activity that could never permit the calm that makes for prayer.

Differences as pronounced as these are quite important. They can only indicate opposition both in ideal and character between the two reformers. Similarities in expression and the fact that Luther consulted some of the writings of the Chancellor mean nothing. He took from them only what pleased him. He was minded to apply to healthy individuals the treatment that had been meted out for the spiritually sick. He read his own ideas into texts quoted from the Chancellor, and he attributed to him opinions that are not expressed

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private interpretation the scriptures, and translation into the vernacular (cfr I, 3, 105 ; IV, 372) ; I, 114, contradicts the basis of the idea *pecca forte* ; Gerson attacks Beghards who declared sin impossible for those who enjoyed union with God. « Quo habito, dicunt se posse agere quidquid carnalis affectio deposcit sine peccato, vel crimine cum ex praecedente non habeant velle et nolle. » I, 174, condems mysticism kindred to that of Luther. I, 500, Faith without works is dead. Cfr Denifle-Paquier, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 274.

(1) I, 137 : « Nihilominus fatendum est quod nemo sine culpa damnabitur ; sicut absque gratia salvabitur nullus ». I. 147, Gerson condemns those, « qui Dei praedestinationem vel reprobationem dicunt tollere operum nostrorum libertatem. »

(2) I, 12 ; 124 ; 457 ; II, 305. Cfr Grisar, *Luther*, vol. I, p. 457.

in any extant work. The name of Gerson was used because it was one to conjure with, because it spelled sincerity and orthodoxy to the men of the Sixteenth Century. But the words of the Chancellor in the mouth of Luther have an unnatural ring and the interpretations that were put upon them far exceeded the intention Gerson had in first uttering them.

Recent studies by scholars such as Jundt, Müller, Strohl and Renaudet stress the dependence which Luther put on the early scholastics and declare that the teaching that caused such a stir in the Sixteenth Century was no more than a repetition of what was held by the Augustinian School four centuries before (1). With that thesis we are concerned here only inasmuch as Gerson becomes a link in the chain that connects Luther with the so distant past. Müller attaches great heed to the role which the ideas of Gerson had to play in developing the mind of Luther, and Strohl who religiously follows him, step by step, does not hesitate to say that certain of the doctrines of Luther are literal repetitions of the teaching of the Chancellor. It is in this way that he tempers the force of the « *esto peccator et pecca fortiter, sed crede fortius* » (2).

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(1) Strohl, *o. c.*, pp. 25, 103-110 ; Müller, A. V., *Luthers Werdegang bis zum Turmerlebnis, neu untersucht*, p. 76-81. Gotha, 1920 ; Jundt, A., *Le développement de la pensée religieuse de Luther jusqu'en 1517*, p. 95 ff. Paris, 1906 ; Renaudet, *Érasme, sa pensée religieuse et son action*, p. 52. Paris, 1926 : « Des théologiens mal armés d'une science confuse et contradictoire lui reprochent (i. e. Luther) des doctrines professées par Gerson et S. Augustin. » Against such ideas may be urged, however, the opinion of the eminent Scripture scholar and exegete, Lagrange, who in a short essay on *The Meaning of Christianity according to Luther and his Followers in Germany* (transl. by W. S. Reilly, S. S.), p. 54. New York, 1920, says of Luther : « He studied Augustine so little that he failed to understand him. No one could be more independent of former exegetes, or more personal ; his exegesis was, in fact, based on an individual state of mind. » Cfr also Denifle-Paquier, *o. c.*, vol. I, pp. 57, 74 ff., 114 ff. ; Grisar, H., *Luther*, vol. II, p. 146, declares that Luther arbitrarily assigned opinions to Gerson. — an indication that it was the prestige of the Chancellor that attracted him.

(2) Müller, A. V., *Luthers Werdegang...*, pp. 75 ff. ; Strohl, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 108-109, quotes from Müller a passage of Gerson's *De consolatione theologiae* wherein Gerson instances trust in God as the best means to down the scruples of a troubled conscience. In his translation, Strohl reads into the text much more than is warranted. The quotations speak for themselves.

He seems willing even to deprive Luther of the credit for introducing the formula of distrust in self and trust in God though it be the very kernel of Lutheranism, and make Gerson the sponsor of the idea (1). Similarly, with the notion of Justification by Faith alone. Gerson in his tract on the *Consolation of Theology* insisted on the theme no one should expect to win salvation by his own striving, that it is Grace and not human effort that counts (2). This may be made to suggest

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GERSON, I, 141 :

Dic igitur cogitationi tuae sollicitanti spem deserere, dum non facis certam vocationem tuam per bona opera, quotidie corruens de peccato in peccatum, ingerenti proinde ne sis de multis vocatis et non electis, sicut vita tua similis est multorum. Dic respondens quod obedis jubenti Deo, qui mille locis scripturae sacrae praecipit ut speres in Eo, cui dicito : Exsurge Domine Deus in praecepto quod mandasti, (Ps. 7) projicio me in Te jubente Te, non es crudelis aut fallax ut abjicias me, juncta praesertim multiplici promissione tua, qua sperantibus in Te pollicitus es quod liberares eos, eriperes, salvares, et glorificares. »

STROHL, vol. I, p. 108 :

« Même si le chrétien n'accomplissait pas des bonnes œuvres et pêchait journellement, et même souvent, voire même d'une façon infinie, il aurait le devoir de maintenir l'espérance, puisque Dieu l'a ainsi ordonné. »

Ibid., p. 109, note : « Ne serait-il pas possible de supposer que le célèbre paradoxe, « esto peccator et pecca fortiter, *sed* fortius fide », si souvent reproché à Luther, ne serait qu'un souvenir de Gerson ? Luther voulant consoler un ami atteint de « pusillanimité » n'a certainement pas voulu dire que ce que Gerson a pensé, en donnant à ses consolations une forme également osée. »

(1) CRISTIANI, L., *Du luthéranisme au protestantisme*, p. 18. Paris, 1911, says that the phrase « despair in self, trust in God » sums up the Theology of Luther. STROHL, *o, c.*, p. 108, note, recalls this statement and declares that the formula was not original to Luther, since Gerson expressed it over a century before Luther's day. But how would the many texts telling of the necessity of effort, of co-operation with Grace, be interpreted ? Cfr I, 429, 500 ; III, 159, 353, 1264, etc.

(2) I, 137 : « Itaque sicut nulla potest assignari ratio, cur inter tot res possibiles fieri, ista non, illa facta est, nisi *beneplacitum Dei*. Ita de recreatione seu regeneratione ad vitam spiritualem, multo magis dici debet : neque confugiendum est ad illorum merita vel opera, quos ab aeterno praedestinat Deus ; *quia si ex operibus jam non ex gratia*. Sed neque priorem aeterna Dei voluntas causa habet qui fecit omnia propter Semetipsum, impium quoque in diem vindictae ; nihilominus fatendum est quod nemo sine culpa damnabitur, sicut absque gratia salvabitur nullus. » The underlined passages are the ones cited by Strohl and Müller as proof that Gerson taught that men must not trust in their works. They omitted, however, the words that from the Catholic viewpoint are the most important in the passage, namely that while it is Grace that saves, it is individual conduct that condemns. None are damned without it be their own fault.

the Lutheran reaction to the famous text in the Epistle of St. James : « Faith without works is dead ». To any one who approached the study of Gerson's writings with the view of gaining confirmation for the doctrines of Luther, statements such as the those quoted reach the proportions of a real find. It is as such that Müller assays them when he cites them as proof that the vein of Lutheran thought extended back over so many centuries.

But for any true appreciation of the opinion of Gerson, we would not be minded to go to the reformer of the Sixteenth Century. No one would question that Luther was a bit hasty when he said that the reason Pope Martin V was opposed to the Chancellor was because he had been able to assist souls in conquering their scruples (1). It is not so much in praise of Gerson as in venting his ire against the Pope that that judgment was given. Similarly, when the reformers supported their condemnation of the Religious Orders in the Augsburg Confession with the authority of Gerson, they were not minded to do justice to his opinion (2). To say that he depreciated the monastic life, and to cite his condemnation of the extreme views of Grabon as proof is, to say the least, an arbitrary misuse of his words. Could the reformers so soon have forgotten that he was the great friend of many religious and that he lent himself generously to be of aid in their progress ? How was it possible to overlook the bulk of the writings of the Chancellor and instance a tract of a controversial nature as representative of his true opinion ? Why should the arguments which he advanced as a curative be used to support the acrid criticisms of men who worked not to heal so much as to harm ? It would seem that the reformers took their own opinions to the consultation of Gerson and sought from him not advice so much as corroboration. This same may be said to apply, in the present day, to those who seek to reconstruct the evolution of Luther's thought but who do not question

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(1) Strohl, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 88, quoted above, p. 357. Paquier, *Luther*, article in the *Dict. th. Cath*, shows instances where Luther interpretations were arbitrary. Cfr *Dict. th. Cath.* vol. IX, pp. 1170 ff.

(2) Denifle-Paquier, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 290, note ; Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. III, p. 116 ff.; Grisar, *Luther*, vol. II, p. 146.

whether he was warranted in each step that he took. The question is not whether or not Luther read some tracts of Gerson and took ideas from them, but whether or not the Chancellor is found to be in full harmony with him. The subjective attitude of Luther should not enter into the discussion ; it has to be a clear matter of objectivity.

How any one could believe that concord exists between the thought of Gerson and that of Luther is difficult to see. The whole basis for Gerson's Theology is in distinct opposition to any such thesis. The authorities to whom he had recourse most frequently and from whom he drew his own convictions were Thomas and Bonaventure (1). He was, to be sure, faithful in consulting the opinions of other Theologians, and with the men of his time he held the great St. Augustine in high esteem. But the authorities who are called most often to support his opinions, and the only Theologians whose works he had with him at Constance were Thomas and Bonaventure (2) whose ideas may only with greatest difficulty be made to support the thesis of Müller.

If one were to take, point by point, the interpretations which Müller, and Strohl after him, show to be possible from the reading of the *De consolatione theologiae* and the *De remediis pusillanimitatis*, writings which are either the fruit of a nervous crisis or are meant to dispel such, and oppose to them the texts from other tracts of the Chancellor which are in flat opposition to such interpretation, he would have the material for long dispute. But the present writing is meant to be a thesis and not a polemic, and the subject is Gerson and not Luther. In defense of the Chancellor, however, it must be urged that he never could consent to an interpretation of

(1) Schwab, *o. c.*, p. 765, note 2, does not allow any dependence of Gerson on Thomas of Aquin «diese durchgangige Rücksicht auf Thomas von Aquin (ist) etwas den anderen Schriften Gersons fremdes. » But cfr Denifle-Paquier, *o. c.*, vol. I, pp. 285 ff. ; Werner, K., *Die Scholastik der späteren Mittelalters*, vol. IV, pp. 98, 113. Cfr also, above, Part Two, Chapter IV, p. 286.

(2) II, 355. In a sermon which he delivered on January 17 th, 1417, for the feast of St. Antony, Gerson quoted the opinions of Thomas and Bonaventure on Ecclesiastical authority. « Vidi nuper sanctum Thomam et Bonaventuram, *hic reliquorum libros non habeo*, dant supremam et plenam Summo Pontifici potestatem ecclesiasticam. » « *Nullum legi praeter Bonaventuram et Thomam.* »

the doctrine of Original Sin in the Lutheran sense (1). Nor would he allow that human endeavor is of no avail and that salvation cannot be won (2). When he talks of predestination it is not after the manner of the Lutherans. For him it is not enough to trust in God. One must strive also. Merit can be won. Man can do good of himself (3). That anyone should be so taken with the idea that souls were arbitrarily condemned and saved by the Absolute Will of God with no consideration to their merits he could not allow (4). None perished without

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(1) I, 428. Here Gerson, writing what eventually became a manual for the instruction of the people, — the *Opusculum tripartitum*, — gives the traditional Catholic doctrine on Original Sin. There is no mention of concupiscence, but of disobedience. No word of the effects of Original Sin being irreparable, but of the remedy offered to all in Baptism, « *Remedium efficax* ».

(2) II, 336 ; I, 429 : to the effect that predestination does not affect freedom of the will. III, 948 : « Breviter, credere debes quod facere potes et adimplere legem Christi ; et si sic feceris, absque ullo dubio salvaberis, et propterea conare, ut eam impleas et serves, quemadmodum conaris, ut in mercimoniis, ut lucreris, laborem et industriam adhibes, et poenam sustines, aut si frumentum habere desideras ut semines ; et sicut a rebus contrariis abstines, ut infirmitates vites et te contra corporales tuos armas inimicos, bibis et comedis cum esuris aut sitis. Consimiliter fac quod in te est pro animae tuae salvatione, absque hoc ut dicas : quidquid egeris, Deum non fore mutandum ; sed adveniat quod advenire debebit necessario. Audivi alias recitare a patre meo, cum adhuc essem puerulus, quod homo quidem seipsum submerserat. Femina quaedam simplex et stolida per urbem ibat et clamabat, ipsum debuisse mori et submergi, et evadere non potuisse. Accessit clericus quidam qui feminae illae magnas duas dedit alapas. Femina illa stupida et irata interrogavit, quare clericus eam sic verberasset. Respondit clericus, ipsam irasci non debere, quin sic de necessitate accidere debebat, quemadmodum ipsa de eo qui se submerserat, diceret. Quae omnino confusa cum suis recessit alapis. » III, 1274 : No *acceptio personarum* with God.

(3) I, 142 : « Sed hic occurrit trepida cogitatio dicens : qua ratione conabor declinare vitia, virtutes acquirere, servare mandata Dei, sine quibus sperare vitam ingredi jam non spes est ; sed arrogans et infidelis praesumptio ? » III, 158 : « Debemus agere primus quod in nobis est secundum viam doctrinae Divinae legis et rectae rationis, sperantes quod ubi non sufficit ista, Deus illuminaret et suppleret residuum oratione mediante. » II, 336 ; I, 429.

(4) The praedestination he taught was *post praevisa merita*. I. 429, Gerson declares what truths must be believed of the Redemption, and comments thus : « Hic est generalis tenor orthodoxae fidei christianae, quam firmiter credere tenetur catholicus quilibet ratione utens, absque curiositate, pure atque sinceriter,.. et nolens plus sapere quam oportet. »

it was their own fault (1). All had at their disposition means of Grace that were infallible if they co-operated (2). These and other such points in the teaching of the Chancellor harmonize ill with any imputations of Lutheran bias.

With the main features of his action it is much the same. Who could combine a mysticism of quietism with the untiring efforts of the Chancellor to preach to others the way of perfection ? Who could agree that he embraced the idea that Faith availed without works, when the whole point of his teaching was summed up in the words of the Baptist : « Do Penance and believe the Gospel » ? How can any one insist that he was given to a theory that discounted the value of human effort and taught that men must despair of their own powers, when we find him indicating despair as one of the signs of false spirituality ? (3) His insistence on the recourse to the Sacraments, to that of Penance and the Eucharist especially, gives the key to all his teaching and shows how it is harmonious, not with that of Luther, but of the whole chorus of tradition. The Council of Trent itself recognized this fact when it cited the opinions of the Chancellor with reverence, and carried out several of the reforms that he had advo-

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He lists amongst the heretics and schimatics those — « qui nostrorum imputabilitatem ad meritum vel demeritum negant, qui Dei praedestinationem vel reprobationem dicunt operum nostrorum tollere libertatem. » Cfr I, 500 ; I, 139 ; I, 87.

(1) I. 137 : « Nihilominus fatendum est quod nemo sine culpa damnabitur, sicut absque gratia salvabitur nullus. » III, 353 ff. Free-will must conform to the Will of God.

(2) III, 5 ; III, 1585, on the necessity of Grace. III, 1239 ff. 1274.

(3) III, 159 : « Signum malum : Quaerere nimis consolationes spirituales et de earum carentia murmurare vel impatientes esse. Signum malum : Desidiae post peccatum sic sibi blandiri quasi sit humanum peccare nec hoc magni pendere ; praesertim quia patet statim medicina per contritionem et confessionem : hoc est enim peccare in spe, cum taliter abstinere debeamus a peccato, quasi numquam pateret remissio, ut in morte. » « Peccatum ideo fugere, quia postea confitendum, et magis dolere super hoc quam super offensa Dei : praeponitur itaque honor proprius honori divino, dum plus movet verecundia confessionis vel ejus poenalitas quam offensa Creatoris. » « Desperatio de aliorum salvatione quasi nihil utiliter fiat eis, vel praedicando vel monendo : hoc enim redundet in injuriam Medici omnipotentissimi, sapientissimi, et optimi : hoc praeterea venit ex radice quinta superbiae quasi sit aliquid qui plantat aut qui rigat. »

cated (1). The fact that the reformers had tried to cover some of their teachings with his mantle did not affect the appreciation which the Fathers of the Council had for him. But, as time wore on, the favors shown him by the Protestant Doctors caused a lessening of respect in Catholic circles (2).

When at the time of the Augsburg Confession, Luther and Melanchthon invoked the authority of Gerson in support of their charges against monastic institutions and vows, they falsified his views. They did not consider his intention, nor did they stop to make a comparative study between what they wanted him to say and the whole tenor of his writings. They took clearly from him what they found favorable to themselves, and winked at the bulk of evidence they might have found in other treatises, or in the same tract, to oppose their own views. They quoted him as the enemy of monasteries. Yet we know from our acquaintance with his writings that when he wrote on religious obligations of monks he took the pains to incorporate in his own teaching the ideas and the words themselves of St. Thomas of Aquin (3). Denifle shows that the ideas of the Chancellor on the precise points for which he is cited by Melanchthon, are in strict conformity with Catholic tradition (4). So much for his teaching on the monastic life. For his sympathies, we need only instance the facts that he had three brothers who followed, in the monastery, the way of perfection, and that many of his closest friends were monks. To make of such a one the foe of institutions to which he was bound by so many ties is a strange commentary on the judgment of the reformers. More than that, it is an unjust use of the opinions of a man whose whole tendency was towards toleration.

It is unfortunate, however, that Gerson was not more particular in his choice of terms. It is a fact that at the Council of

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(1) Pallavicino, Sf. *Histoire du Concile de Trent.* Transl. by Migne, 3 vols, Paris, 1844-1845. Cfr vol. I, p. 580 ; vol. II, pp. 313, 650-652, etc. It must be acknowledged, however, that many who cited Gerson's opinions at Trent were minded only to use him as a support for their claims in favor of local authority.

(2) Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. III, p. 118.

(3) III, 428 ; II, 669-681.

(4) Denifle-Paquier, *o. c.*, vol. I, pp. 285-290.

Constance he had to rise to defend his opinions against the charges of heresy leveled against him by the friends of the Duke of Burgundy. The charges were maliciously made as an attempt to discredit the Chancellor in the eyes of the Council and so weaken his stand for the condemnation of the teaching of Tyrannicide. But, none the less, he had some difficulty in defending himself, because his words were susceptible to a twofold interpretation (1). One would think that the rude experience of having been charged with heresy would have made the Chancellor much more careful afterwards. Yet, the writings upon which Luther must have drawn if he really borrowed ideas and took suggestions from Gerson would be amongst those which were written after the Council of Constance. These would be the *De consolatione theologiae,* and the *Expositio super septem psalmos poenitentiales.* It is chiefly in these tracts that ideas are found which would seem to bear out the thesis of Müller and Strohl, and it is particularly from the former writing that they quote (2). As we have seen, however, Gerson balanced his teaching well, and for every reference which might bear an interpretation favorable to Luther there can be adduced a quantity of quotations to bear out the orthodoxy of the Chancellor.

Scheel, whose exhaustive research into the years of Luther's formation leaves little that is not uncovered, minimizes the role which the teaching of the Chancellor played (3). There

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(1) Cfr Part One, Chapter IX, p. 182 ; Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, p. 390.

(2) Strohl, vol. I, pp. 108-109 ; Müller, *Luthers Werdegang bis zum Turmerlebnis*, pp. 75-88. In IV, 8-13, Gerson uses other expressions that might have suggested some of his ideas to Luther, had he read them. There Gerson speaks of his sins being *covered over.* « O igitur me beatum si tecta sunt peccata mea. Quomodo tecta ? Non ita tanquam in me abscondita maneant ; sed ita deleta ut tu Deus ea non videas, id est non aeternaliter punias. Te enim peccata videre, quid aliud est quam peccata punire. » III, 606, speaks of *imputed sin.* « Cum enim Tu mihi non imputaveris peccatum, tunc justus sum et non alias. » But the context shows that the Chancellor is talking of the difficulty of making a good confession, and his statement does not imply that individual effort is vain.

(3) Scheel, *Martin Luther*, vol. II, pp. 373-374 : « In den Bibliographien ist dennoch Johannes Gerson gern ein besonderer Einfluss auf Luthers religiöse Entwicklung im Erfurter Kloster zugesprochen worden. Aus

was an influence indeed. But it belongs more to the later years of Luther than to his youth and had to do more with Gerson's political theory than with his Theology (1). Certain it is that the spirit of the Chancellor, — a spirit of deep respect for ecclesiastical authority, — a spirit that would not tolerate, for an instant, open criticism of superiors, and that strove to work on lines of tradition, did not pass over to Luther. There is little resemblance in his fight to keep the Church one and united and the violent attack which Luther directed against Rome. Pity it is that his own example did not carry over till the Sixteenth Century and make the work for the reform less a matter of politics and more a matter of ecclesiastical legislation. A greater pity still is it that the mysticism that he taught in the Schools and in private had not borne the full fruitage that he had hoped for. Men were not minded to begin to put their own house in order. They preferred still to cry for the reform *in capite* (2). Though the leaven of Gerson's teaching and example did spread, — and we shall see later to how great an extent, — the fact that those who came after him did not distinguish the personal reform from the political one had much to do with the continuation of the evil down to the days of Luther.

There are many aspects of the life the Chancellor that must have appealed to those who came after him, which were they imitated should have made for the work of reform. Such was his spirit of self-sacrifice, and his immunity from the dangers of ambition. Another feature was his humility that satisfied itself with the fulfillment of even the most modest tasks such

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schwersten geistlichen Anfechtungen soll er ihn herausgerissen haben. Dergleichen stellt wiederum eine ganz unzulässige Ausbeutung eine Tischrede dar. W. Köhler hat richting beobachtet (*Luther und der Kirchengeschichte*, I, S. 344) das Gerson erst in späteren Jahren als Kirchenpolitiker Luther bedeutungsvoll wurde. Er is geneigt, die Bedeutung Gersons fur die ersten Klosterjahre Luthers kaum allzu hoch zu schätzen. » Cfr Scheel, pp. 127, 130. Cfr Grisar, *o. c.*, vol. I, p. 145, note 2, quotes from Köhler, W., *Katholizismus und Reformation*, pp. 362 ff. Giessen, 1905 : « Gersons Mystik blieb ihm innerlich fremd. »

(1) Grisar, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 146 ; Scheel, *o. c.*, vol. II, p. 374.

(2) Dubruel, *Gallicanisme*, article in the *Dict. ap. de la Foi Cath.*, vol. II, p. 218.

as that of training the young, and that had no extravagant idea of personal dignity or worth. Yet another trait is the devotional calm that pervaded the whole life of the Chancellor and made prayer of most of his actions. There are in the lives of all great men qualities which stand secure before all « peering littlenesses ». They are what make true fame, what draw the admiration of many, but what too often are not imitated. It is so with Gerson. Many of his faults have lived long after him and have sometimes discouraged the esteem with which men were wont to hold him. The appeal which Luther made to the authority of the Chancellor dimmed, for a time, his prestige in Catholic circles. Similarly, the dependence that was put upon his teachings in the Seventeenth Century by the Gallicans hurt not a little his reputation for orthodoxy. But despite it all, when we consider the character of the man and the evils with which he had to cope in his time, and when we reflect that all his striving was directed for the good of the whole Church, we feel warranted to say that had he lived in either the Sixteenth or Seventeenth Century the cause of orthodoxy would not have had a more sincere nor a more devoted champion.

As to the Gallicanism of Gerson, we recall the slowness with which he was brought to embrace the views he finally professed on the superiority of the Council. When finally, in 1408, he stood for the appeal to numbers it was because no other way was left open to peace (1). The Gallicanism of the Seventeenth Century that hid behind his reputation, — in anonymous publications, at times (2), — was quite another thing from the Gallicanism that he taught, or for that matter from the Gallicanism of the predecessors of Gerson, — Durandus, Occam, Marsilius, Langenstein or d'Ailly (3). It is doubtful

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(1) Hergenroether-Kirsch, *o. c.*, vol. III, p. 128 : « So blieb wohl kein anderes Mittel übrig als ein allgemeines Konzil, das eventuell gegen alle vorhandenen Päpste vorgehen musste um die Einheit herzustellen. »

(2) Thus *L'Esprit de Gerson*, a book which proposed to contradict the ultramontain teachings of Bellarmine, by recalling some of the ideas of the Chancellor. (Cfr translation made in London, 1710, pp. 40 ff.)

(3) Dubruel, *art. c.*, in the *Dict. ap. de la Foi Cath.*, vol. II. p. 201 ; Salembier, *Gerson*, article in the *Dict. th. Cath.*, vol. VI, p. 1318.

if even the great love of country that animated the man would have permitted him to sympathize with the political ambitions of Louis XIV or the proposed independence of the French episcopate. For when we analyze what it was that Gerson really taught, and when we separate from his authentic writings the many tracts of Gallican persuasion that are usually attributed to him, we find that his ideas are not one half as extreme as is generally alleged (1). His teaching was aimed to correct a grave danger that harassed the Church, it was calculated to be the means of correcting the schism that had split Christianity into three camps and divided the Church almost on lines of nationality (2). It was directed against the heresies that threatened (3). In the last analysis peace was secured, and Martin V and Eugenius IV saw to it that Papal supremacy was acknowledged (4). Gerson's Gallicanism was an expedient. If he wished to limit the power of the Pope, it was to keep secure the interests of religion against the recurrence of schism through national ambitions or personal pride.

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(1) It is certain that he is not the author of the *De modis uniendi et reformandi ecclesiam* (161-200), nor of the *Octo conclusiones quarum dogmatizatio utilis videtur ad exterminationem moderni schismatis* (II, 200), nor, in all probability, of the *Sermo factus coram Alexander Papa in die Ascensionis* (II, 131-141). Cfr Salembier, *Gerson, Jean le Charlier de*, article in the *Dict. th. Cath.*, vol. VI, p. 1321.

(2) Gerson's esteem for the Papal office is seen in his effort to restore it to a high place of honor. Speaking on the question of the Bull *Mendicantium*, in 1410, he declared that it was neither his intention nor that of the University for which he spoke to oppose the Pontiff. II, 436 : « Nec Universitas nec ego ipse intendimus aliquid dicere in praejudicium, aut sancti Patris inhonorationem : tenemus enim quod posteaquam bene fuerit instructus ipse cassabit omne hoc, aut destruit de quo conquerimur. Pro honore suo laboramus, pro statu suo, pro officio et potestate sua ; nihil potest contra veritatem, et data est potestas in aedificationem non in destructionem. » The last sentence is one that explains his whole attitude in the matter of the schism. The quarrel of three claimants for the Papacy was a grave scandal and did much harm to the Faith, It was against that the Chancellor reacted.

(3) II, 7 : « Formidandum est ne papa et sui qui similiter clerici sunt aliqua sentient in oppositum, et ita fiet schisma in iis quae sunt Fidei, quasi irremediabile ; quia numquam poterit sedari nisi una pars revocet et retractet suas assertiones ». Cfr above, Part One, Chapter IV, p. 62.

(4) Pastor, *o. c.*, vol. I, pp. 324-325 ; Hefele-Leclercq, *o. c.*, vol. VII, pp. 528, 567, 790 ff ; Valois, *Le pape et le concile*, vol. I, pp. xxi, 91-93, 129-146, etc.

It is doubtful if this attitude would have made him sympathetic to those who grouped themselves under his standard in the Seventeenth Century.

So much then for the orthodoxy of the man. There is, however, a much more attractive side of the influence which Gerson waged over those who followed him. Though general application of his reformatory movement did fail, it did not fail entirely. For his ideas lived on and gained following in every field of Catholic endeavor. Those who thought of the reform of the Church were sure to kindle their ardor in the quiet flame of his teaching. Those who took upon themselves to instruct the people were sure to come under the spell of his eloquence and to imitate his characteristics. The sermons of the Chancellor became a sort of armory from which preachers drew their ideas. But it was particularly in the lives of those who tried for greater perfection that the theories of Gerson lived on. As we studied his mystical teaching we had many opportunities to notice the direction that his influence took. We have seen the wave of his following spread until it touched upon distant lands. We have seen how wide and how varied was his following when men held him in the same reverence as they did Bernard, or Bonaventure, or Thomas (1). Here, in order to come to a fuller appreciation of his mysticism, we look closer to perceive what was the fame of which Vincent of Aggsbach spoke (2), and what was the reason for it.

One of the striking indications of the power of the ideas of Gerson was that they immediately became general property. The art of printing had much to do with this dissemination of his works, but the printers simply responded to a great demand. When Nider in his moral writings (3) and in his *Alpha-*

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(1) Viller, M., *Nider est-il l'auteur de l'Alphabetum divini amoris ?* Article in the *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique*, tome IV (1923), p. 370. Viller remarks : « Gerson est par l'auteur de l'*Alphabetum* mis sur le même rang que les Bonaventure, les Hugues de Saint-Victor, les Bernard, les Anselme.

(2) « Gerson habet nomen juxta nomen magnorum in terra. » Cfr Vansteenberghe, *Autour de la docte ignorance*, p. 195.

(3) Viller, *art. c.* p. 377.

betum divini amoris (1) was lauding the teaching of Gerson, and when Nicholas of Cusa was carrying with him, in his visitations for the reform of monasteries, a determination to make more known the theories of the Chancellor what wonder if men sought after his writings. The controversy as to the correctness of his mystical teaching, coming as it did at the time when Gutenberg was printing his first Bible drew attention to the advisability of reproducing some of his tracts, and within twenty years (2), various printing establishments had undertaken to supply the demands that were made of them for editions of the practical tracts of the Chancellor. The reforms of Saint Antonine of Florence have much in common

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(1) *Ibid.* The thesis of Viller is that Nider is not the author of the *Alphabetum divini amoris*, despite the testimony of Mombaer and others of his time. The proofs upon which this opinion is based are chiefly two. For external witness, Viller quotes from a catalogue of the Dominican library at Vienna drawn up in 1513, but telling of the condition of the library in the years prior to 1497. The catalogue was made by Michael Purlwasser, a Dominican. It is presumed that at Vienna, where Nider spent much of his later life and where he died, one would be certain what writings belonged to him and what did not. But Purlwasser said that the *Alphabetum* was due to « Thomas canonicum in Kottzing. » The second chief argument upon which Viller bases his conclusion is drawn from the tract itself. In the statement : « Postquam autem, gratia Dei adjuvante, exercitatus fuerit, tunc *sine omni cogitatione praevia* centies in die multum amorose mentem suam in Deum elevare potest », Viller sees a remnant of the teaching of Hugh of Balma that contemplation could be had without knowledge. But it is impossible he says, that a Thomist, as convinced as Nider, could accept such a teaching. « Impossible qu'un thomiste comme Nider ait accepté si facilement et sans le moindre correctif une théorie aussi contraire à celle de S. Thomas que celle d'Hugues de Balma sur la possibilité d'actes d'amour *sans connaissance préalable.* » We do not accept the hypothesis of Viller, for the following two reasons : First, it is not improbable that the statement of Purlwasser was inspired by the edition of the *Alphabetum* of Memmingen (1489) which attributed the work to Thomas à Kempis, « in Koczen » : *Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke*, vol. II, pp. 102-103, n° 1560. Leipzig, 1926 and secondly, because, in the passage which he quotes as indicative that the author of the *Alphabetum* held that contemplation could be had *without previous knowledge*, the vital word is *cogitatione* and not *cognitione*. The obvious translation of the passage is that no great deliberation is needed to put one's self in the presence of God. It is for this reason that we do not accept the opinion that Nider was not the author of the *Alphabetum divini amoris*. (The italics in the texts quoted are my own. A.)

(2) Cfr Hain, *o. c.*, vol. I, pp. 463-476 ; Graesse, *o. c.*, vol. III, pp. 59-61.

with the projects that we have seen advanced by Gerson (1), but a line of influence cannot easily be drawn between the two. With the other great Dominican reformer, — John Nider, — there can be no question, since he, with Cusa, helped so much in the spread of the fame of the reformer of the University of Paris.

John Geiler of Kaysersberg was another admirer of the Chancellor (2). The reformer of Strasburg made no secret of the fact that Gerson was his great inspiration, and he not alone modeled his thoughts according to the ideals of Gerson but he was zealous in arranging for the publication of his works. He proved his admiration by going himself to Lyons to collect what manuscripts he could find, and by sending to Paris to have copies made of yet unpublished works (3). This was the motive for the edition of the works of Gerson in 1488 and, though we are not certain as to the name of the printer, we know that John of Kaysersberg was the one who edited the volumes (4).

If we take up the measures for reform advocated by von Kaysersberg and if we follow the direction which his effort took we find striking similarity between his career and that of Gerson. The maladies that he attempted to cure were much the same (5), and the remedies that he advocated were so similar to those we have found expressed by the Chancellor that it is not difficult to say where was the source of his inspiration. His reaction against popular superstitions, his insistence upon the importance of frequent communion, the

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(1) Salembier, *art. c.*, in the *Histoire des Conciles* by Hefele-Leclercq, vol. VI, p. 1543.

(2) Dacheux, L., *Un réformateur catholique à la fin du* xv^e^ *siècle, J. Geiler de Kaysersberg*, p. 377. Paris, 1876.

(3) *Ibid.*

(4) Schwab, *o. c.*, pp. 790-791.

(5) Von Kaysersberg wrote on the matter of refusing to give communion to convicts about to be executed. (Cfr Dacheux, *o. c.*, pp. 45-49.) Gerson wrote on the same topic (II, 427-432). Kaysersberg attacked superstitions and irreverences; so too did Gerson. He insisted on the necessity of intructing the people; Gerson did likewise. Similar to the Chancellor he urged frequent communion on the advice of one's confessor and he built his reforms from the Sacraments. Dacheux, pp. 230-251 compares Kaysersberg to Luther.

value he attached to the Bible as a source of Faith, the many aids he lent to people troubled in conscience, the character and the content of his preaching, — all indicate that the reason why von Kaysersberg was so faithful to the ideas of the Chancellor was because he found him so practical and stimulating (1). Like Gerson, he drew up a list of the qualities that he would seek in those who had to instruct the people by word of mouth. And while these may, as the biographer of von Kaysersberg says, have described the man himself, they were certainly inspired by the reading of Gerson's sermon to the Synod at Rheims, and are almost identical with the list of qualities which Gerson then drew up (2).

It would be interesting to follow at length what precise effect was attained by the educational reform that Gerson advocated and by his interest in the training of the young. Lack of testimony makes it difficult to surmise how deep an impression was made; and the disturbed conditions of the times went far to hamper a concerted movement at the University. Though Realism did prevail until 1437 (3), the Nominalists gained strength again, and the struggle of the Schools was recommenced, to go on until, in 1474, Nominalistic teaching was banned by royal edict from the halls of the University (4).

With reference to the training of children, Gerson struck a true note for reform which the Council of Trent was to repeat a century after. Not even Budé and Rabelais, — though they be famed for their reaction against « dry » scholasticism and for the development of a new method of teaching, — made as thorough an attempt as did he to stimulate a new educational system. It was not until long after his day that a concerted move was made to appreciate the character of the one learning

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(1) Dacheux, o. c., p. 540 points an instance where Kaysersberg literally copied Gerson.

(2) II, 512-558 : *Sermo factus in concilio remensi, anno Domini 1408.* We have quoted, above, from the sermon where it deals with the qualities of pulpit orators. Cfr above, Part One, Chapter VIII, pp. 150-151, and note; Dacheux, o. c., pp. 531-532.

(3) Ehrle, *Die Sentenzenkommentar Peters von Candia*, p. 154.

(4) *Ibid.*, pp. 151, 323-326. It is remarkable that in their defense made in 1471, against the decree of the King, the Nominalists spoke of d'Ailly and Gerson, « Doctores catholicos » as their greatest glory.

and to adapt lessons to individual natures. In this respect, the ideas of Gerson were far ahead of his time. It is possible that something of his spirit lived in the practices of the Brethren of the Common Life, whose schools were the backbone of the Christian Renaissance, and who, like the Chancellor, took upon themselves to form the minds of the young.

But, whether or not they imitated his educational method, the Brethren certainly did esteem him as a mystic. This is particularly evident in the monasteries of the Congregation of Windesheim, which were intimately connected with the activities of the Brethren and which shared with them the heritage of Ruysbroeck and Gerard Groote. As the Fifteenth Century drew to a close, the name of Gerson began to supplant that of Ruysbroeck as the champion of the mystical life (1), and his works were to be found in manuscripts that formed part of the spiritual readings of the monks (2). Not infrequently, we come across manuscripts that contain : the Rule of the Augustinian Canons, certain writings of Gerard Groote and of Thomas à Kempis and, along with them, tracts which Gerson wrote for the guidance of monks (3). This can indicate only one thing, namely, that the teaching of the Chancellor was put on a par with that of the great men in the congregation of the Canons of Windesheim. This reverence for his writings is noticeable not alone in the houses of the Low-Countries, but

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(1) Debongnie, P., *Jean Mombaer de Bruxelles, Abbé de Livry, ses écrits et ses réformes* (Recueil des travaux p. p. les membres d'histoire et de philologie de l'Université de Louvain. Série II, fasc. 11) p. 255, Louvain, 1927 : « Vers la fin du xv^e^ siècle, on n'en peut douter, le principal oracle de la « Devotion Moderne » est le chancelier de Paris. »

(2) Sanderus, *Bibliotheca belgica manuscripta*, Part Two, pp. 136, 218-219, etc. Cfr also Vanden Gheyn, *Catalogue des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique*, vol. III, pp. 364-375 ; vol. VI, p. 57, Brussels, 1903, 1906.

(3) Two noticeable examples are ms. lat. 10, 608 of the Bibliothèque Nationale, which belonged to the monastery of Rebdorf in Germany, and ms. 11,778-11,782, of the Bibliothèque Royale of Brussels. The former contains works by Augustine, Groote and à Kempis for one hundred and thirty-eight folios. The remaining fifty-four folios are given to works of Gerson. The manuscript of Brussels is one that must have seen constant usage since it contains the Rule of the Congregation of Groenendael. Strikingly enough, more references are made to Gerson than to Ruysbroeck. Both mss date from the early Sixteenth Century.

wherever the movement spread, it carried with it the same devotion to Gerson's teaching and in almost all the libraries of the Canons were to be found works of the Chancellor in number. With the activities of the Canons of Windesheim and of the Brethren of the Common Life the reaction which Gerson made against dry and futile speculation lived on. In their teaching and in their lives were realized many of his ambitions to make the movement for the reform deeply personal. In the mysticism that they embraced may be seen reflected many qualities of his solid and pratical piety.

One of the men who was intimately connected with the spirit of the Congregation, — John Mombaer, — shows very well in what esteem Gerson was had by them. Himself a disciple of Thomas à Kempis, and familiar with many spiritual systems, Mombaer was, none the less, particularly taken by the living character of the teachings of the Chancellor (1). He delights in speaking of Gerson as « a penetrating searcher after the truth », as one whose doctrine is « limpid and practical », and he makes no secret of the fact that he often had recourse to Gerson's writings (2).

Mombaer was particularly interested in the evolution of a method of prayer, for his own advantage chiefly, and he found great inspiration in the tracts on *Meditation*, on *Mystical Theology*, on *Spiritual Poverty* and on the *Mountain of Contemplation*. Once he had found a method that he deemed practical, he submitted to the insistence of members of his community and wrote what Watrigant called « an encyclopedia of practical spirituality », the *Rosetum exercitiorum spiritualium* (3). In this long tract which Mombaer divided into *Rosaries*, or types of meditation, the appeal to the authority of Gerson is striking. Mombaer had read almost all that was written before his time on spirituality. Yet the author of

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(1) Debongnie, *o. c.*, pp. 240, 241, 255.

(2) « In cujus saepe vitula aramus. » Quotation from Debongnie, *o. c.*, p. 255. Cfr Watrigant, art. in the *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, tome III (1922), p. 145.

(3) Watrigant, *La méditation fondamentale avant saint Ignace* (Collection de la Bibliothèque des Exercices de saint Ignace, n° 9), p. 58. Enghien, 1907.

his choice was Gerson. Gerson was the one after whom he faithfully patterned his doctrine. This is especially true when Mombaer considers the act of meditation itself, and it is for this that the *Rosetum* is chiefly valuable (1). He passes the teachings of Denys, Pseudo-Areopagite, of Thomas of Verceil and John Ruysbroeck, « because they are too high for imitation », and he sets upon Gerson as the « practical one » whose guidance he would follow (2). Of course, in the matter of systematic meditation, he was to receive little help from the Chancellor, who, as we know, was opposed to any attempt to make meditation an exercise of reason (3). But, none the less, Mombaer thought it the surest path to follow the counsels of Gerson, and in this he but reflected the spirit of his congregation, and the esteem with which all who were interested in spiritual progress held Gerson at the end of the Fifteenth Century.

This influence is even more particularly noticeable when we take up the study of Spanish mysticism in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignacius or in the later mysticism of the Sixteenth Century. For, though it cannot be said that Loyola was directly affected by the teaching of the Chancellor, it is none the less true that he was acquainted with his mysticism. When, in the year 1522, Ignatius of Loyola went into solitude at the monastery of Montserrat to make the retreat that was to decide his life work, one of the writings placed in his hands by the monks of the place was the *Ejercitatorio* or *Spiritual Exercises* of Garcia de Cisneros (4). This was a tract composed, or better compiled, with the aim of helping souls cultivate regular habits of prayer (5). The author culled from many spiritual writers, but his chief authority was Gerson. In the sixty-seven Chapters of the *Ejercitatorio*, no less than

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(1) This is in the nineteenth treatise of the *Rosetum* ; Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. III, p. 25.

(2) Debongnie, *o. c.*, p. 257.

(3) Cfr above, Part Two, Chapter V, p. 324 ; III, 450 ; 461-462.

(4) Watrigant, *Quelques promoteurs de la méditation méthodique au quinzième siècle.* Enghien, 1919.

(5) Garcia de Cisneros reformed the Abbey of Montserrat, and obliged all his monks to follow spiritual exercises. Pourrat, *o. c.*, vol. III, pp. 29-34.

twenty-six were taken literally from the Chancellor (1). There is no doubt that Ignatius was impressed by this work, since he styled his own book of spirituality by the same name. Gerson was known to him as the author of the *Imitation* and that may have helped arouse interest in his mystical tracts (2). It is thus no exaggeration to say that Ignatius was familiar with the ideas of Gerson. But, beyond that, an influence cannot be followed. For Ignatius, however much he might have been indebted to others for his inspiration, was not one to be bound by rote (3). Everything that passed into the alembic of his mind was so charged with his own vigor that when it appeared in his life or action it sparkled with a vitality and a newness quite his own. But to have had even a remote influence in the formation of the system that was to hold attention of the mystics for centuries and to train the « *conquistadoros* » in the contest of the Counter Reform must have been comforting to the Chancellor.

But with Spanish mysticism another line of influence may be traced for Gerson. Into the spiritual theories of a man who was to exercise an important role in the formation of the great St. Theresa, many of his ideas entered (4). For Francis of Osuna, the Franciscan author of the *Tercer Abecedario*, « one of the most important mystical works that Spanish literature possesses » (5), regarded Gerson as a man full of sanctity and wisdom, and placed his teaching on a par with that of Augustine, Bernard or Bonaventure (6). Time after time, in his *Abecedario*, he invoked the authority of the

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(1) Watrigant, *Quelques promoteurs...*, pp. 70-83.

(2) The *Imitation of Christ* was known in Spain as the *Gerçonzito*. Cfr Groult, P., *Les mystiques des Pays-Bas et la littérature espagnole du seizième siècle* (Recueil des travaux p. p. les membres des conférences d'histoire et de philologie de l'Université de Louvain. Série II, fasc. 9), p. 57. Louvain, 1927.

(3) Pourrat, o. c., vol, III, pp. 41-43 ; Codina, A., *Los orígenes de los Ejercicios de S. Ignacio de Loyola*. Barcelona, 1926.

(4) Hoornaert, *Sainte Thérèse écrivain* (Recueil des travaux publiés par les membres des conférences d'histoire et de philologie de l'Université de Louvain. Série I, fasc. 49), pp. 327-338, Louvain, Paris, Bruges, 1922.

(5) *Ibid.*, p. 327.

(6) Groult, o. c., p. 122.

Chancellor. And this, not because he judged him to be the author of the Imitation, but because he had formed his appreciation rom first-hand acquaintance with his mystical writings (1). Many tracts of Gerson, such as the *De arte moriendi* and the *De meditatione cordis* had been translated into Spanish (2). Many of the monasteries were rich with copies of the more spiritual works, and amongst the tracts that Osuna quotes freely are the *De monte contemplationis*, the *De simplificatione cordis*, the *De religionis moderamine*, the *De mystica theologia*, the *De consolatione theologiae* and the *De distinctione verarum visionum a falsis*. Gerson was for the pious Franciscan not only the « most christian doctor »; he was one whose authority was indisputable. In the *Tercer Abecedario*, Osuna appealed to the word of the Chancellor more than to any other authority. And the sober teaching of Gerson upon which Osuna put so great dependence had some share in the spirituality of Saint Theresa, since early in her spiritual life she learned to appreciate the calm determination and the deep content that go hand in hand with true piety (3). These are qualities which we have many times remarked in Gerson. They may be said to have been the chief characteristics of his spirituality. Because of them his works were in high repute in Spain. Hoornaert and Groult both agree in assigning to him an important share in the formation of the predecessors of Saint Theresa and of Saint John of the Cross, in whose works we find the highest expression of spiritual science.

Other lines of influence may be traced in other lands. Though it might seem, at first sight, that his home country permitted other nations to outdo her in marks of esteem for the man who made his name synonymous with the office of Chancellor, his memory was not suffered to grow cold. He was honored there in all his qualities of preacher, reformer and mystic. Men like Menot and Maillard whose reputations for oratory were nation-wide at the dawn of the Sixteenth Century did not hesitate to take their inspiration and their

(1) *Ibid.*, pp. 122-124.
(2) *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.
(3) Hoornaert, *o. c.*, pp. 138, 332 ff.

doctrine from him (1). The impetus that he gave to preaching in the vernacular was followed and there was wide demand for the sermons that he wrote. If there are not so many printed editions of his works that originated in France, that is because the industry did not develop there as quickly as it did in the Rhineland.

The name of Gerson has found honor throughout the centuries in the encomiums which have been tendered him from great mystics and great saints. To Denys the Carthusian (2), who, like Mombaer, was faithful to carry out the work of Gerson in widening the appeal of the mystical life, the Chancellor was « a Doctor enflamed with a holy zeal for the edification of the Church of God. » For Ignatius he was remarkable for his « ardor and prudent effort for the salvation of souls » (3). For Bellarmine he was the « defender of the Church » (4). For Francis of Sales he was one who « spoke marvelously of the effects of the Love of God » (5). But the greatest token of esteem that the name of Gerson received was had in his own land and from his own people who for two centuries honored him with the title of « Saint » and set his life and example as a type to be imitated.

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(1) Piaget, *Sermonnaires et traducteurs*, article in *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française des origines à 1900*, vol. II, pp. 245-257. Paris, 1896.

(2) Mougel, D. A., *Denys le Chartreux* (1402-1471), pp. 19-21. Montreuil sur Mer, 1896.

(3) Masson, *o. c.*, pp. 414-415.

(4) *Ibid.*

(5) Cfr *Treatise on the Love of God*, Introduction.

CONCLUSION

In the study of the life and ideals of Gerson we have found ourselves associating with characters and participating in movements that may be said to crystallize the spirit and the aspirations of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries. Such was not the intention we had in commencing the present work. We had thought to do no more than form an appreciation of the mystical teaching of the Chancellor, see what use he made of the spiritual tradition that came down to him, and try to make some few applications of his wisdom to the needs of an age that is groping to find a path to a world, cut off by the dictums of materialistic Philosophy and the pretensions of false Science. We had thought to spend our moments of research as in some cloistered nook, engrossed only with teachings on the Way of Perfection. We calculated to shut ourselves away from the clamor and the distraction of a turbulent age. But we could not do so. The mysticism that we wished to study had been organized as a remedy ; it came as the high point of a whole programme for reform ; it was directed to people of all levels of society and had grown out an ambition to bring solace to troubled spirits. Unless we lived over the happenings, and unless we gained contact with the miseries, the injustices, the sadness, the courage and even the exaltations of the time, we could not understand, much less apply, the lessons that Gerson taught. His mysticism was a response to a need. It had to be studied in the light of the need. It had to be submitted, not to a dry analysis that would reveal principles and practices, but to a more painstaking scrutiny that would take in something of the panorama of history.

There come, in almost every period, men whose lives offer a resumé of the activity of the time. Gerson certainly, was such a one, and in the examination of his life work we receive an introduction to the problems of the first years of the Fifteenth Century. It is not ours to review here the fruit of every

Chapter of the present work, and point out every situation into which we entered, every personality with whom we have obtained contact through his good graces, or every appreciation we may have formed of his time. But our study up to this point has been dominated by the requirements of Logic. We have had to analyze and divide. We have studied first the characteristics of the reforms, and, then, those of the mysticism of Gerson. And this, not because the two were kept separate in his life, — as if he carried one personality to the councils of Bishops and nobles and another to his study and to his prayer, — but the two activities go hand in hand. The mystical longings began when Gerson was a little lad trained by his parents to walk before God in love. The zeal for the reform came later when he was confronted, at the University, with some of the fruits of ambition and selfishness.

It was really the mystical longing of the Chancellor that prompted his action in the reform. He worked to restore all under the reign of Christ. Though we see him swept high upon a turbulent wave of political and ecclesiastical problems we must not think that he lost, thereby, his title to esteem as a spiritual authority. To few men was it given to make the sacrifice that he made. We have seen him try to break from the necessity that he felt impending in the early years of his career as a reformer. We know that his whole being repulsed the responsibilities of public office. We have realized from his contentment at Bruges, and from the nature of his life when he had chance to arrange it to suit himself, that no discipline could have been more painful to him than the necessity that called him from seclusion into the full glare of prominence. This submission to duty is the best proof of true mysticism. It shows the depth of sincerity, the completeness of his devotion to the interests of religion, and his utter disinterestedness.

In all the movement for reform, the deep spirituality of the mystic entered. It would have been possible for us to study, side by side, the manifestations of the spirit of the reformer and that of the mystic in Gerson. But while that might have resulted in a better sense of the singularity of purpose in the man it would also have made the study disjointed and might have prevented a true appreciation of Gerson in either capa-

city. For that reason, we have kept the two activities more or less separate, introducing only when necessary for perspective the relations of the mystical teaching to the reform movement of Gerson. Now, however, as we turn back to glance over the ground covered we can notice how the elements that we have subjected to individual study, blend into an harmonious whole. From this distance, we get the benefit of the full tones of the tableau we have tried to paint. We can estimate the influence of the Chancellor upon the men and action of his time and we can form some estimate of the importance of the role that he played.

To few men has it been given to commence their life-work with as roseate a prospect of success as Gerson had. To have been a member of the Faculty of Theology at Paris was title enough to prestige. To have enjoyed, so soon, the reputation as an orator that made him the mouthpiece of the University and the Court preacher was an honor beyond the ambitious dreams of most men. But to be named Chancellor at the age of thirty, to be sought after by nobles and princes, to have had the offices of Chaplain and Confessor to the King thrust at him, — and to have refused them, — made the name of Gerson known internationally. For Paris was still the Mother of learning on the Continent, and to the men of the University of Paris all the nations looked for guidance. It is true that the Schism, and the growth of national ambitions cost the University much of her influence; but the full effect of that was not to come in Gerson's day. In the affair of the Schism, in the matters of the defense of Faith, in the condemnation of heresy and in direction of general interests of religion, members of the University sat with Bishops and Cardinals in the Councils of the Church. So too, in the questions of State. And in all these matters, Gerson, by virtue of his post, had to take a hand.

By the character of his response, he showed himself a true leader. When others talked of reforms and tried to legislate everything but their own private failings out of existence, he had the courage and the conviction to live up to his preaching and to point out a way by his own example. When expediency played a great part in the designs of his fellow professors, and

obligations both to their patrons and to their own ambitions shut them off from a disinterested view of conditions, Gerson saw the issues clearly and applied his remedies fearlessly. Not that he blatantly proclaimed his projects to the world. Not that he exscoriated evil wherever he detected even a germ of it, thus heaping opprobrium on those at fault and making irreverence for authority the only fruit of his toil. But he began in a calm and reasonable way to bring to the attention of those who most needed reforming, — the scholars, — a programme that, if followed, would infallibly have brought the results attended. This was the Charter of reform in the teaching of Theology, and the introduction of Mystical Theology into the domain of the class-room.

The importance of the Charter for the reform in education cannot be exaggerated, — the more so here, because hitherto little attention has been paid to it in the life of Gerson. It is only in recent years, and chiefly with the discovery by Ehrle of the fact that the color of the Philosophy taught at Paris changed from Nominalism to Realism in the period when the Chancellor was in power, that due setting has been given to his *Letters on the Reform of Theology* and to the underlying motive for his defense of the Dominicans. But when we put into close relation his demands for reform in 1401, his *Lectures on Vain Curiosity* in the year 1402, his position as spokesman of the University before the Pope and before the Crown in 1404, the fact that he was Chancellor and Machet, his friend, was Rector of the University, in 1405, when Realism came back into power, we begin to see an aspect of his character that has been quite neglected. We see a conviction that could cast aside much of the bias of early training. We detect a pragmatism that could recognize the weaknesses of the system that he had learned himself, and a love of truth that made him quick to adapt himself to the religious needs of the scholars. It appears clear how thoroughly he was drawn to the spiritual side of life, and how religion and not scholarship was the dominant note of his character. We see in him, then, not the ardent Nominalist that even present day writers picture to their readers, but a man who was the first to stem the tide of errors that had taken their rise in Nominalistic belief

and practice and to build a way for the return to Realism. We make no claims for his Realism. We do not attempt to call his Philosophy by any such name. But we point to the fact that he attempted to make concord between the two systems, and that in his Theology and in his mysticism, none but those authorities whose Philosophy was founded in Realism had access.

The mystical ideal of Gerson was the secret for his attempted reform in education, and it is difficult to find a surer note of his greatness than the fact that he carried mysticism to the Schools. For some, such as Schoonhoven, the idea of harmonizing scholasticism and mysticism was shocking (1). But the viewpoint of Schoonhoven was moderate compared to that of the so-called mystics who looked for private revelation to meet every contingency of their lives, and who would have made « religious experience » the sole norm of their Faith. Such as these were offended by the tendency of the scholars to sit in judgment and to condemn all manifestation of extraordinary piety or fervor. And to a degree, rightly so. For the flavor of the learning at Paris was of a highly speculative quality, and it was much out of contact with the demands of the day. But between the two positions there was a just mean. And that was the path that Gerson took. He was given neither to the aloofness of his compeers, nor to the curiousness of those who masqueraded under the name of mystics. He was an extremist in neither sense and he recognized the need of balance on both sides.

Against the inroads of false mysticism, he erected many barriers, chief of which were his tracts written for the instruction of the people. With patient care he studied every new apparition of devotionalism or, to say it better, of emotionalism masked under the appearance of devotion, and tried to set down rules for the correction of those who were too often

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(1) I, 77 : « In tali materia quae solum per experientiam et gustum cognoscitur, magis est credendum his qui notitia experimentali haec gustaverunt, quam his qui solo lumine intellectus et litterarum studio pollent... Et ergo non videntur mihi recte sapere qui nolunt quod aliquis de divinis scientiis disserat nisi fuerit physicis et naturalibus scientias praeditus et imbutus. »

the creatures of self-deception. To many, the fact that people were led astray by false mysticism would be sufficient reason to arouse prejudice against any desire to attain true fervor. It was so with most of the men at the University. With Gerson, however, it had the contrary effect. It made him determine to do all he could at the University, where were trained the ecclesiastics upon whom rested the hopes of the future, to make their Theological training of vital interest in their lives. He set about to form true Theologians, in his sense of the word, that « a Theologian was one who lived the truth ». To do so he called them to their real vocation which was, not an intellectual ideal, though that had to enter, but a mystical ideal. This had to be their chief and lasting concern. When other professors were arguing over impossible contingencies, and dispatching actualities with brillant flashes of dialectic, he passed by the traditional method of teaching; he left unnoticed the realm of theory and gauged his lessons by the test of reality. He set out to train men who would counteract the evil of the time, whose words would be according to the convictions they held, and whose lives would be a commentary on the Gospel truths. Such teaching was, to the mind of Gerson, the chief hope for the reform, *cardo totius reformationis*.

As mysticism entered intimately into the reform of education, so did it form an integral part of the reform of the clergy and religious. For the Bishops and secular clergy, the ideal of perfection that he held out was what for the Middle Ages was symbolized in the lives of the Apostles. They were true contemplatives who lived always in the memory of the Divine revelation that they had received. But they were also men of action whose work was to preach the Gospel and save souls. So with the clergy. They had to live in the world, to sympathize with the sorrows and share the burdens of the people, and they had to keep their conduct in such harmony with the truths they preached, that men would be led by their example. An impossible ideal for such a time! some might say. But no, it was neither impossible, nor was it entirely an ideal. It was the norm of a priest's life. It was the burden which he accepted voluntarily when he chose to become an *alter*

Christus, an « other Christ ». It was to such a life that the counsel of the ordaining prelate bound him when he charged him to imitate what he preached, *imitamini quod tractatis*. And the proof that the times were not so wretched is to be had in the fact that such a life was both preached and practiced by men like Gerson.

In the synods that were gathered to deal with the matter of the reform of the clergy and in the visitation that was done to keep check on the standards of secular and religious alike, the Chancellor took a prominent part. For the prelates whose heads had been turned by the glamor of power and whose ambition was to rival the splendor of the lay princes, his recommendation was that they seek to be humble, that they have no preoccupations beyond their duty to their charges, and that they see to it that the people were instructed. For the clergy whom the neglect of superiors had made seek comfort in the pleasures of the lay-man, he held out the virtue of penance, and the motto which summed up his programme for them was : *Do Penance and Believe the Gospel*. The fact that there were many amongst them who imitated the vices of the people, and who, instead of leading by good example, were a source of scandal, did not make him submit all to a rude censure, and the fact that some did not live up to the high standard that their calling demanded did not prompt him to urge that the ideal be changed. Such would have been weakness on his part. He knew that the fruits of the Black Death, of the Schism, of false learning, and of ignorance were being reaped. He asked for generosity in the clergy. He plead for leniency on the part of superiors and he tried to encourage with the dissemination of knowledge a nobler standard than was generally embraced in the priesthood.

So with the religious. With their vocation and with their ideal of life he was deeply sympathetic. The thoroughness of his devotion is testified by the repeated advices that he tendered them in sermon, conference or tract. Perfection was what they were striving to attain. The chief reason for their community-life was had in that. He urged them, then, to be true to the ideal of their founder and to let nothing distract them from the concern for salvation. If he placed the secular

clergy on a higher level, it was not because he disparaged the religious life, but because he distinguished between personal responsibility and the responsibility for souls. If he defended the claims of the parochial clergy in the quarrel over jurisdiction, it was because he could allow no question of privilege, but rather of duty, in the matter.

Gerson's ideal of the religious life may be summed up in an anecdote which he tells of his brothers in the Celestines. One of them, — John perhaps, — wished to devote himself to special studies after his entrance into the Order. But against this Nicholas objected. « My brother », said he, « the religious life is not a School of Theology or of Philosophy; but it is a School of Christian blessedness and of discipline. You are come here not to acquire wordly learning, but to train yourself in humility and virtue. Leave therefore to the Scholastics all that pertains to the intellect, and see that you live up to the spirit of our Rule which will suffice to arouse your affection. » And Gerson comments, « *et vere ita est, et verissimum est quod dixit* » (1).

With the people he could not preach openly such mysticism as he tried to encourage amongst students and priests. Too many and too serious dangers to the Faith had resulted from attempts to startle sluggish consciences by threats or to entrance the fervent by suggesting unusual devotions or penances. When he began his ministry there were to be seen, on all sides of him, extremes of spiritual ambition that drifted unguided into error. Prophets rose up unnumbered. Some were driven by distrust of their priests, but more by their own willfulness, to seek, in visions and relevations, the answer to the problems that beset themselves and their time. Amongst the intellectuals, men played with astrology and sometimes

(1) II, 706 : « Consideret quod schola religionis valde distat a schola secularis inquisitionis. Dicebat hoc unus fratrum meorum alteri fratri suo, et meo, dum simul in Ordine Coelestinorum morarentur. Frater, haec religio non est schola theologiae, vel philosophiae, sed christianae felicitatis, et disciplinae ; non venisti ad doctrinam et saecularis scientiae vanitatem, sed ad disciplinam et humilis vitae bonitatem. Linque quaestiones scholasticis viris, quae erudiunt intellectum, tibi satis sint regulares nostrae obedientiae, quae inflammare sufficiunt tuum affectum. »

with magic. With the ignorant, superstition played a minor part in every day's life. One could not address either class with the aim to inspire them with true mystical ideals. They had first to be instructed and directed. Such was the direction that the sermons of the Chancellor took.

But for all that there was a certain check to be exercised on lives and practices of the folk : and we have seen Gerson ready to condemn the heresy of the Beghards and the Flagellants because they neglected the Sacramental treasure-house of the Church and thought more of their own devotions and penances than they did of the ordinary channels of Grace. He was an indefatigable enemy of Hus because the latter rejected arbitrarily the use of authority in the Church and also because he dared tamper with the Sacramental dispensation. In the spirit of a pastor, Gerson watched over the lives of his people and sought to ward off from them all dangers either to their Faith or to their morals. For that reason he censored the teaching of mystics and objected against a too general dissemination of doctrines as exalted as those of Ruysbroeck. By the same token, he stood watch over the various influences that could come into their lives and lower their standards of morality. The conflict on the question of the *Romance of the Rose* was but a phase of a conflict that that he waged all his life against laxness. The severity of his judgment in the case of the Duke of Savoisy illustrates his determination to protect, at all costs, the vital interests of religion against both the corrosion of immorality and the attrition of indifference. His defense of Joan of Arc against the accusations of irreligious men shows his judgment on righteousness and his love of an inspiring ideal.

Nor was his activity for the care of the people limited in a strictly negative sense to inhibitions and safeguards. There was a striking positive side to his reforms and it is, again, to be interpreted best in the light of his mysticism. He did not preach mysticism from the pulpit, but he preached a doctrine which, if followed faithfully, would inevitably make true mystics of all, — mystics, not in the sense that they cultivated physical rapture, or had an eye to extraordinary spiritual favors, but mystics in that they lived with the one ambition of pleasing God.

It was for this reason that Gerson watched over the devotions of the people to see that they had the true spirit of prayer and did not put their confidence in external actions. For the same motive, he insisted on the Holy Eucharist, as the central devotion of the Christian heart, and the surest test that he gave for spiritual progress was the love of Christ. Those who frequented the Sacraments with proper dispositions were in an infallible way of perfection. Whenever he had occasion to advise the spiritually minded, — and it was often, — the counsel that he set forth as indispensable was that they cast off all confidence in their own ability and that they put their trust in an experienced guide. In this, must be seen no inference that the director had to be himself a mystic. But anyone who, as priest, had the duty to confess and to direct was by his office fitted for this work. Self-confidence was the surest way to perdition. Humility and obedience were marks of predilection. Anyone who felt the call to a higher life was to accept it, knowing that he did well. But none, were they religious or lay, were to put private devotion ahead of the duties of their state. In this mysticism there was little fear of misinterpretation. There was scant danger that it would lead to emotional or intellectual heresy. But there was assurance that, if followed, it would bring true peace to souls.

Chiefly characteristic of the mystical teaching of the Chancellor was its note of orthodoxy. The proof of this is had in the fact that he drew upon the best sources of mystical tradition in the Church. Augustine, Bernard, Hugh and Richard of Saint-Victor, Bonaventure and St. Thomas of Aquin, — all these represent strong currents of mysticism. Their teaching forms the basis of the mysticism of the Chancellor. His originality was in the arrangement that he gave to their doctrines and the manner in which he harmonized what might have been thought to be conflicting views into one system.

Of the many disputed questions to which his life and work have given rise, we have tried to speak objectively, to render an impartial decision and to base every conclusion on strict evidence. To any one who occupies himself with the biography of a great man there comes a desire or better an ambition to prove him great in all things and to vindicate him an all mat-

ters in which he might have erred. We have felt the impulse many times when dealing with Gerson. It would have been so sure a mark of value as a mystic if we showed definitely that he was the author of the *Imitation of Christ.* We examined his titles and found them most insecure. It would have been, perhaps, to the man himself, an appreciable favor, had we been able to free him from some of the charges of Gallicanism and to show that his teaching on the matter of Papal authority was misinterpreted grossly. But the truth is that he erred, and though his teaching was expedient and at the moment proved effective, it was none the less wrong.

Other questions too, have come into the study, — questions as to the effect of the Nominalism of Gerson upon his mystical teaching, and as to the dependence of Luther upon the Chancellor for his ideas and doctrines. We have tried to study both problems in all fairness to the man himself, to respect his views and to account for the general principles underlying all his action. As a result, we feel quite justified in saying that the mysticism of Gerson stands alone, that those who accuse him of all the errors of Nominalism do him an injustice. Account must be taken of his reaction against the vogue of Nominalism in the University. In the matter of the dependence of Luther upon Gerson, we feel that an exaggerated importance is attached to it. It cannot be denied that the reformer of the Sixteenth Century consulted certain tracts of the Chancellor and that he was much impressed by their wisdom and sobriety. On the other hand, it cannot be denied either that Luther's interpretations of the teaching of Gerson were sometimes most arbitrary and that what he loved most in the Chancellor was his stand for the superiority of the Council over the Pope. Between the characters and the lives of the two is an indisputable contradiction. If there is to be pointed out a line of influence from Gerson the Luther, the starting place must naturally be what Gerson meant and not what Luther or present day scholars thought he meant. The only way to a solution of the matter is by rigid objectivity, and this must take into account the full teaching of the Chancellor. In view of this we feel that the conclusions of Müller, Strohl and others are exaggerated in the instance of Gerson.

These conclusions are cited here, because they are places where we have departed from interpretations that are customary in either Catholic or Protestant circles.

To have had to study the career and the teaching of so sympathetic a character as that of Gerson has not been for us without deep attraction and rich return. If, by the writing of this work, we have succeeded in bringing to an English reading public a true portrait of a man whom their scholars have always admired, then we have realized a hope of filling a gap that has yawned for many years in the presentation of Ecclesiastical History for English readers.

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ERRATA

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ERRATA

p. 14, line 2 from top of page, Legrange *read* Legrand
p. 18, note 2, » sixty-ninth » sixty-sixth.
p. 29, line 13 from top of page, disproval » disapproval.
p. 31, » 7 » » » » strong by » strongly.
p. 32, » 5 » bottom » » delete the word *to*.
p. 114 first line, Colleges *read* Schools.
p. 127, line 11 from top of page, four » two.
p. 150, note, line 10, IV, 495 » XIV, 195.
p. 164, line 11 from bottom of page, Chimy » Chiny.
p. 188, line 4 » » » » Ordonnances » Ordinances.
p. 189, » 12 » top » » » » »
p. 195, » 5 » bottom » » Rheims » Rouen.
p. 210, » 8 » top » » delete the word *his*.
p. 297, » 10 » » » » *industria read industriae*.
p. 306, » 7 » bottom » » estatic » ecstatic.

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